SUNDAY
April 23, 2023
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THE YAMUNA PROJECT

Highlighting the legacy of a 'dead' river

Government puts the river at the centre of a push to bring to the fore the civilisational connect with waterbodies

NEWS» PAGE 9

Eco-anxiety and India's young

MAGAZINE » PAGE 1

Mohamed Dagolo: A warlord of his own

PROFILES » PAGE 13

Titans pull off a big win over Super Giants

SPORT » PAGE 15

Hakki Pikki: caught in Sudan's civil war

Marginalised back home, the bird catcher tribe of Karnataka had tasted success as herbal healers in Africa till the war arrived

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

The story of how the Hakki Pikki – or bird catchers of Karnataka – got caught in a civil war in Sudan is a contemporary tale of migration, development, and the human desire to thrive.

Today, the tribe is scattered across the capital city Khartoum and in the Darfur region in west Sudan. A few stranded members of the community said their total number in the African country is likely to be around 300, including women and children. Out of them, approximately 250 are in Khartoum, while 33 are in Darfur, where a civil war has raged for many years.

Prabhu Dass, one of the 33, is now stranded in Al Fashir, the capital of North Darfur. With gunfire in the background, he speaks in a steady voice in Mysuru Hindi, the signal coming and going, explaining how and why members of the tribe made the journey to Darfur between 2021-22. "Bird catching is our traditional occupation. But now we don't have that kind of dense forest anymore and the birds have fled," he said, adding that raising a family was not possible with their small earnings.

The total number of Hakki Pikki in Sudan is likely to be around 300. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hakki Pikki of India are the latest group to arrive in Al Fashir, a region that has witnessed an influx of people because of the Darfur crisis. A nomadic tribe, the Hakki Pikki don't have ready access to education and vocational training; so they relied on their native wisdom to earn a living, Mr. Dass said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 7

CBI books environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta and his NGO for FCRA violation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered a case against lawyer Ritwick Dutta and his organisation, the Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), for allegedly violating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act's (FCRA) provisions. LIFE, along with U.S.-based NGO Earth Justice, has also been accused of attempting to stall coal projects in the country through litigation.

According to the First Information Report (FIR), instituted on a reference from the Union Home Ministry, the main allegation against Mr. Dutta is that he received ₹41 lakh as foreign contribution in 2013-14 and then created LIFE, which got ₹22 crore from Earth Justice USA masked as a "professional receipt".

The FIR alleged that "LIFE and Earth Justice are in the process of stalling

Ritwick Dutta. LIFEINDIA.ORG

coal projects in India... EJ [Earth Justice] and Sandler Foundation are trying to take down India's existing or proposed coal projects and ECF (European Climate)" is routing $120,000 via Earth Justice to LIFE for litigation purposes. Besides, LIFE purportedly transferred the foreign contribution it received to other NGOs, in violation of the FCRA.

The Ministry said that Earth Justice was an American NGO that funded legal professionals in various countries to litigate against coal projects.

Along with LIFE, it was complicit in bringing foreign contributions into India to target and stall coal projects, which would impact the country's economic security, it said. LIFE was not offering any legal advice to Earth Justice for financial consideration, but was being paid foreign funds to stall development projects.

In 2020-21, the Ministry said, the agreement between LIFE and Earth Justice showed that it funded the association for litigation in Indian courts, more in the form of grants to litigate, but not in Earth Justice's name. As alleged, Earth Justice had proposed a five-point strategy to put pressure on the relevant government and/or the project proponent and asked Mr. Dutta to suggest a project as a case study for an international session in April 2017 "to study the application of international strategies to a case in India".

NEARBY

Five of family die in accident on expressway

BENGALURU
Five members of a family were killed in an accident on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway in Channapatna taluk on Saturday. » Page 3

BJP may not name a Lingayat for CM post

BENGALURU
Union Home Minister Amit Shah has reportedly expressed reservations about openly declaring that the BJP will make a member of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community the Chief Minister if the party is voted to power.

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MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES

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Face value: Varnara Panchuruli gets ready for the Bhoota Kola ritual at the Mujungavu Kulal Banjan Kutumba Adhimoolasthana temple near Kumbala in Kasaragod, Kerala.

An offering of light: The Bhoota Kola performer, who is revered as the manifestation of God, takes a moment to complete a sacred ritual.

The night of Bhoota Kola

The ancient art form of Bhoota Kola, which gained mainstream popularity after the film *Kantara*, inspires anticipation and hope in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Kasaragod

Thulasi Kakkat
thulasidas.pv@thehindu.co.in

As the evening deepens into an inky darkness of the night, the people of the village of Mujungavu near Kumabala in Kasaragod, Kerala, gather around to watch the Bhoota Kola. The air is suffused with anticipation and hope, for the Bhoota Kola is an oracle and prayers to it are believed to bring them fortune and relieve them of their problems.

The trained Bhoota Kola performer, in a possessed state, provides the answers to the community and is revered as the manifestation of God himself. The ritual performance that starts in the night goes on into the early hours of the morning.

Performed in the open air, the Bhoota Kola comes in the forms of Panchuruli, Kallurutti, Koragajja and so on. Originally from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka and the northern parts of Kasaragod district, the Bhoota Kola has striking similarities with Kerala's Theyyam, but have subtle differences too.

The costumes of the Bhoota Kola are not as strikingly colourful as those of the Theyyam. The Bhoota Kola performer is bedecked in an attire entirely made of intricately woven palm leaves. The elaborate face painting, however, is similar to Theyyam. The incantations the performer utters are in Tulu. The *nema* or *kola* (as the performance is called) usually involves a fierce dance accompanied by drums, music and other rituals.

Even for the ardent followers of Theyyam of Kerala, the Bhoota Kola from Tulu Nadu was not so familiar until the release of the Kannada movie *Kantara*, which brought the less-known ritualistic art form into the mainstream. People have now begun to flock to the interior villages of Tulu Nadu just to witness Bhoota Kola.

The Tuluvas, the people who speak the Tulu language, believe in animism and the Bhoota Kola is performed to invoke these spirits of Nature. The traditional right to perform the *kola* belong to the Nalike and Parava tribes of the region. A typical Bhoota Kola season starts in January and extends to May.

Legend has it: Kuppe Panchuruli stands in front of a makeshift shrine and narrates the history of the Panchuruli, the spirit of a wild boar, in the form of songs.

Flames sizzle: The Mookambi Gulikan, one of the spirits, circles the fire in ornate attire.

Classifieds

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URDU SYED MUSLIM 23/158cm, B.Tech BioMed, deen and beautiful girl, Upper middle class family seeks Tamilnadu based Deen Groom working in European countries. Contact: +919443695850, +919629216106

GOOD LOOKING, Telugu, Devanga 25yrs/162cms, M.Tech(Biotech), employed in MNC, Hyderabad, seeks suitable groom below 30years. CNB. Whatsapp: 9160697799

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DM II yr Seeks PG (Clinical) Super Specialist / Civil Servant / Group I officer / well employed PG in Engineering from Mudaliyar Community born before March 1989. Ph: 70104 29191

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GROOM REQUIRED for a 28 old girl, MTech from IIT Chennai ,working as scientist in Chennai ,from Kerala belongs to SC, Vishakam ,parents doctors. Whatsapp to 9447763685

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SM4 SINGHAL Girl 5'4"/June 1992, B.Tech MBA(XLRI) 24 LPA, Pref MBA Qual. boy in NCR M:7533807993, nitink_singhal@yahoo.co.in

PUNJABI

AGE 34, Height 5'3", Qualification: PHD, Working as Professor, Sister : Dentist (Married in Canada) Nai SikhGursikh Boy preferred Preferred Delhi region Ph 6280501367

TAMIL

WANTED SUITABLE and Equally Qualified Protestant Christian Nadar, Good Looking Groom, Employed in Australia Preferably in Sydney. Below 35yrs 168cm to 180cm for a Protestant Nadar Girl 160cm, Wheatish, 30yrs, MS in Bio Medical Engineering, Presently an AU Permanent Resident living and working for a Global Medical Technology Company, Sydney, Australia. 80,000 AUD–PA. Ct: 7200045725

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CSI/CHRISTIAN 37yrs/165cms B.Tech (I.T), M.B.A, Eng CTS, Now at UK (Work Permit) seeks B.E & B.Tech MBBS and abroad Bride groom Ct: 9791322874, 8870560816.

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YADAVA GIRL age 25 BE Working in Software co 9L. P/A seeking yadava groom CT 9381382000

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KULALA (TELUGU), 26/160, BE, Uthiradam, 2nd marriage, issueless, short lived. Seeks suitable groom from educated family, working professional not more than 34, Ct: 80757 60926.

VANIYA CHETTIAR, M.Sc, 43/157, Karthigai, Govt. Scntf. Officer seeks equally Qualified Employed Groom. Contact: 94452 07116

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VELLA PILLAI 25 ME (CSE) MNC Chennai, 168 cm Kadagam Poosam seeks suitable Groom. Contact: 8778043772, 9444562345. Email: kannansd@gmail.com

MUDALIAR,29/169cms, B.Arch M.S (Italy), Project Officer, Delhi, Father CA Auditor, Mother Retd Professor, Affluent & Educated. Looking Profsnly Qlfd match frm any equal community. abroad/India.9994022447,9994022440

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HINDU GAVARA Thanjavur 31/162 Poosam Kadagam MBBS, DGO, MS (O&G) Govt, Employee seeking bridegroom any Naidu MBBS with PG, Group1 Officer below 35 any hindu BC FC preferred within Tamilnadu or Pondy whatsapp 9789742455/9786154291

TAMIL

ARUNTHATHIYAR 26/152, BE, Chennai, Star Magam,Seeks Groom Govt Employee, Swe,Banks 9487303638/ 9443521217

Hindu Nadar 40/ 162cm, M.E; Slim, Fair Girl seeks Educated Groom. Phone : 9500022496

PILLAI (CNB): 26/V.Fair & Beautiful, UG, Diploma in Apparel Tech, Diploma in Graphic Designing, Coimbatore, Elite Family, Seeks groom Business / Abroad – 8925019776

HINDU NADAR 32/MBBS, M.S., (Daughter of Elite Family) Well Settled Family, Seeks Any Doctor. 9444401000

SC ADIDRAVIDA, 34/ B.E. MNC 75, 000pm, (IAS Officer's Daughter) Seeks Groom. Ct: 944440–1000

HINDU TAMIL Yadhava Girl, tall wheatish , B Tech, currently working in Citibank Belfast UK, 93 born Seeks Suitable IT Groom who can relocate to UK. CNB. Ct:73050 10105

HINDU SC(AD) 32 Govt Dr MS(O.G) Rs.75000/pm seeks suitable. Groom 9443158169

TAMIL BRAHMIN Girl, 35yrs,162cms, B.E,M.B.A Currently assigned to London, first marriage but nullified immediately. Alliance invited from highly qualified and well employed Groom, preferably from UK & India age upto 40yrs, marital status any with modern outlook. Ct: 9382856277

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93451-21214
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Christian & Hindu Nadar, 26/166, BE V.Fair, V.VIP,Seeks Equal Status Merchant Boys.7299525999 / 7550113468

DKV, 28/160, Revathi, B.Tech(NIT), Masters (USA) seeks well-educated, NRI groom from same community with clean habits. Preferably from USA/Canada. Contact: 94869 67791, 94430 27791.

Naidu, 50yrs, +2 Completed, Widow, Seeks Suitable Groom. Good Family Age, Caste No Bar. Ct: 70925 69171.

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SUITABLE MATCH for Hindu IAS 37, 172, Divorced, no child, CNB. PG doctors preferred. Contact 8826377843

Divorcee Rama 60 NRI pension 12 LPA Seeks Tamil speak girl age 40-55 M7604936990

ENGINEER

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TAMIL

TAMIL MUSLIM, 26, M.E., Structural Engineer, Handsome Groom seeks suitable Bride. Ct: 8754666944

CHRISTIAN NADAR, South Indian 38/185, good looking, Divorcee, well settled in Pennsylvania / USA, Software professional, seeks suitable Bride age between 30 - 36 educated good family background, Contact: 94869 53596, 86672 54988.

PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN parents (College Professors) seek born again and God fearing bride, preferably working in USA for their son B.E, M.S (USA) 27/172, working in USA, H1B. Caste no bar. Contact – 81227 85230

CHRISTIAN NADAR, 34yrs/178cms, MBBS with dip in Cardiology Private Doctor good looking lives in Nagercoil, Innocent Divorcee seeks same caste qualified Bride/ Divorcee above 28yrs. Ct: 90039 83230

CHRISTIAN 41/170 B.E Software Engineer, Chennai, Never married, seeks bride from Elite family, Caste No bar, CT– 9500188067

AGAMUDAYA MUDALIYAR Family Seeks Match for Their Son / BE / Aug 1996 / Slim / Wheatish / 175 cm / CNB / Chennai Owns Industry. (www.vgsref.com) (www.vgsprayag.com), 9790753377

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HINDU DEVENDIRA kula vellalar M.E. 28/168 Asst. Engg. in PWD seeks suitable bride 8248195168, 8667380725

MUDALIAR 29, BE, MS 180cm, Smart, Working in USA well settled Seeks Bride CNB Ct.8778514465 / 7200866346

MUDALIYAR BE, Chennai 1985 Fair Well Settled,1st Marriage,Bride wanted Emp/Unemploy.9952010118,8610518808

SC AD 29/ B.E., [EEE] Govt.Job, Officer {B.S.N.L.} 70,000p.m. Govt. Or Pvt. Seeks Bride. Ph:7397674481

HINDU MUDALIYAR BE, 27, 175cm Income 200000 Seeks Suitable Bride 9710093999 / 8939691888

WIDOWER 69 Hindu Tamil Business Good Health Needs Like Minded Soul Partner 50-60 with Good Health to lead Family 8608813794.

33, AYILYAM, ICWAI,MBA (IIM), Manager, SC, Hindu, Seeks Ragu Kethu Bride, caste no bar Chennai 9677266232

Doctor 25/178, Fair Seeks Suitable Match MBBS / BDS Arcot Mudaliyar Age:20-22. 9940027947 / 9791059529

HINDU NADAR 31 173 cms M.ENGG, Area Manager MNC CANADA CAD145K PA well settled Seeks Bride below 28 Yrs Ct 9446004604

HINDU NADAR CA/CFA, 27, 170cm, Income 500000/–, Seeks Suitable Bride. KA Raman Nadar 9380791999

MUDALIAR (CNB) 30/180, Handsome, B.E, MS(USA) Business Analyst, Canada, Elite Family, Seeks Bride Good looking & Affluent Family–9840437858

HINDU NAICKER 48yrs/179cms BE, US return, High Net Worth, Clean Habits, First marriage, Vegetarian, seeks Bride. Caste No Bar. Divorcee and Widows excuse. Ct: +917397267754 wedadv09@gmail.com

HINDU NADAR 35, BE, 175cm, Income 200000 Divorcee Seeks Suitable Bride KA Raman Nadar 9380791999

SMARTHA BRAHMIN Telugu Bachelor 45/175 Koundinya Chithirai, B.Tech M.E, Sr DGM, Seeks Brahmin Bride, Ct. lsbalaji94@yahoo.com, 9445006191

BRAHMIN 70 seperated matured author well settled looking for a friendly soulmate widow above 50 travel ready. 8220822951

SEEKING SIMPLE, Clean Habits,Vegetarian Bride willing to be Homemaker for our Son Ms(CS) USA,28yrs/178cms,Iyer,Vegetarian & Clean Habits.Financial Status of the Bride does not matter.Ct. WhatsApp:+1 732 372–8410

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✔ **BRIDE WELL** qualified, unmarried, between 29 and 32 for well settled unmarried PG Engineer Entrepreneur, Vadama, Tamil Iyer, Bharadwaja , Punarpoosam, 34, living in Bangalore. Genuinely interested parents may write to – gojaarha@gmail.com

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9710093999 /8939691888

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Groom in Coimbatore, Very fair, Industrialist (Well reputed), Very Rich, Financially very strong with good net worth requires bride from same community, must be good looking, energetic, etc, please send photos, horoscope, biodata to the following
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smgi2010@gmail.com
99434 20333

31 / 164cm ME. Assistant Professor Chennai Divorcee seeks suitable Bride Unmarried/ Divorcee- No issue. Naidu/ Mudaliar / Pillai / Chettiar Preferred. Contact : 94430 52596 / 94456 89306.

TAMIL

SOZHIYA VELLALAR, 38/165cm, Bsc MBA, Senior Consultant in Software at Chennai. 15Lakhs P.A Ct: 9840937725

✔ **VELLALA KOUNDER/** Magaram/ Thiruvonam/ 39/ 5.5" / Dip.in Mechanical/ Service Manager/ Pvt. Ltd/ 70000p.m. Seeks suitable Bride. Ct: Suryakumar # 5/1, 15th Avenue, Ashok Nagar, Ch–83. Ph:9444395006 Brokers Excuse

CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar Parents seeks Fair, Tall Bride Preferably MS/ Working in USA for their second son B.E MS, in USA 28/117Cms H1B,well Settled and working in USA Contact: 98404 65657.

TELUGU

KAMMA NAIDU, Very fair & handsome, BE, 29yrs, 5ft 9inch, SWE, MNC Chennai, 18 LPA, seeking very fair, slim & good looking bride from the same community, Call: 9841025124

BALIJA NAIDU 28/B.E., Govt Job, (AE, TNEB) 60,000Pm Seeks Bride. 9087604894

KSHATRIYA RAJU (Telgu) Groom Doctor MD Radiology (16 sept 1993) Chennai, Same community bride with PG preferred. Contact: 9500198706.

BALIJA NAIDU, Rishabam, Rohini, 30/167, B.TECH (Business Manufacturer And Trader) Fair Seeks Well Settled Educated & Good Family. Naidu Bride in Chennai 9790963402

NAIDU 33/180, Handsome, MBBS, MD, DNB, MGM Hospital,1500000. PA,Affluent Family, CNB. 7299576644,7299576666

BRIDE WANTED
Elite Kamma Naidu Family Located in Chennai, Seeks Alliance for their only Son 02/08/1999, 5.8, Meenam Uthirattathi,Fair,B.com,MBA with Good Networth. Seeks Alliance from any Naidu Family only (Sub sect ok)
0-98410 71701

BALIJA NAIDU Lawyer 45yrs, Looking for suitable Telegu Speaking Bride. Subsect No Bar. Contact:94440 48537

URDU

MUSLIM BOY 28/178cm, BE(ECE), MS(USA), Proj Mngr MNC Chennai, 26L PA well to do family 9445556810

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

TAMIL

REDDIYAR GROOM 51 Australia PR Divorcee and Bride 47 MBA looking for suitable Bride and groom Ct:whatsapp no +61 435 496 817

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MUDALIYAR, 24, 183 cms, Businessman, BE. Lives in Chennai. Parents are Entrepreneurs. Family is financially well off with a good net worth. Looking for a like minded match. Contact: 6366448343

MUDALIYAR, 28, 175 cms, Businessman, MBA. Lives in Chennai. Belongs to an affluent business family with a good net worth. Looking for an amiable match from similar community. Contact: 6366448344

CHETTIAR, 31, 180 cms, Businessman, MS. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Doctor. Family is affluent with a good net worth. Looking for a like minded and well educated match from similar community in India. Contact: 6366448344

VANNIA KULA KSHATRIYA, 29, 170 cms, Managing Director, BE. Lives in Hosur. Father is an affluent Businessman with a good net worth. Looking for an affable match. Contact: 6366448344

VANNIA KULA KSHATRIYA, 25, 173, Doctor. Lives in Salem. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off with a good net worth. Looking for a suitable match. Contact: 6366448344

ELITE GROOMS WANTED

REDDY, 24, 170 cms, Entrepreneur, MBA. Lives in Chennai. Parents are Entrepreneurs. Family is financially well off with a good net worth. Looking for an affable match. Contact: 6366448343

REDDY, 25, 160 cms, Pursuing Masters in Interior Designing. Lives in Coimbatore. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off with a good net worth. Looking for a like minded match from same community. Contact: 6366448344

NADAR, 23, 163 cms, Pursuing MDS. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Engineer in PWD and Mother is a Teacher. Looking for a like minded and well educated Doctor or Any Professional match from same community in India. Contact: 6366448344

LINGAYATH, 27, 173 cms, Post Graduate, from a Bangalore based high profile family with very good net worth. Looking for an amiable match from the same community in Bangalore. Contact: 6366530296

CHRISTIAN, 23, 157 cms, MBBS. Lives in Nagarkoil. Father is a Captian in Ship. Family is financially well off with a good net worth. Looking for a compatible match from RC Community. Contact: 6366448344

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NAIR BOY 32 yrs/170 cm Non IT Engineer settled in Chennai seeking suitable malayali bride from Kerala & tamilnadu. Contact : 9840850465

MIDDLE CLASS Ezhava mid-fifties, trim healthy, first marriage needs healthy life partner. Girls without liabilities also welcome. 9426573213.

NRI

NAIDU 28/180, Pooratathi, BTech MS Working & PR of Sweden. Bride willing to go abroad CT 9566682220

PUNJABI

CHENNAI BASED Punjabi Khatri Father Wants Suitable Brides for 2 Sons aged 38 &32,Tall Handsome Educated,well placed.Caste No Bar. 8681094931

TAMIL

AFFLUENT CATHOLIC family seeks suitable bride for son 38 yrs, divorcee, 177 cm tall, MBBS and Masters Bio Science and well settled. 9442266487

MUSLIM BOY 28/178cm, BE(ECE), MS(USA), Proj Mngr MNC Chennai, 26L PA well to do family 9445556810

SC ADIDRAVIDAR 28/B.E, Govt Job (Probationery Officer) State Bank of India 53000Pm Seeks Bride 7200067015

ARCOT MUDALIYAR 28/B.E, Central Govt Job, Section Engr (Southern Railways) 60000Pm Seeks Bride 9514173518

BRAHMIN GOUTHAMA Rohini, 26 yrs, 168 cms, B. Tech (Genetic engineering), M.Sc. Genomic Medicine (London, UK), Settled in Chennai, Affluent business family. Seeks Brahmin girl, professional, aged below 25 yrs. WhatsApp Parent: 93422 68247

AGAMUDAYA MUDALIYAR, Divorced, 41 Mirugasiridam PhD TN Govt Job Rs 1.21 Lakh P/M,170cm,70kg, 7904550883

DKV 33/173 Hastham Manager Govt. Bank seeks suitable bride from educated family. Caste No bar. 9940507235

TAMIL

HINDU 55 Yrs, Mutually Separated, seeks life partner around 45. Middle Class Good Family. Ct 8428080722

CHETTIAR (CNB) 31 Moolam star, Civil Engg, Coimbatore. Rich and Affluent family. Very fair and good looking only son seeks bride from decent family 9894657750

SMART WELL settled Nadar groom working in IT company, age 30 years height:173 cm complexion: wheatish brown education Qualification: B.E, Income: 12 lakhs/PA seeking for a suitable bride who is educated and career oriented (caste no bar) horoscope optional according to the bride's side, Contacting person: groom's mother. Cell : 9944491730, 9159036165. Mail: rajashanthi15@gmail.com.

A WELL settled Healthy Hindu 57, Separated Seeks Elite Independent Lady as life partner & Soulmate Caste Nobar 7397087032 mducbe18@gmail.com

HINDU MUDALIYAR 25 BE 178cm Working in Netherland Inc–10Lacs well settled Rich 9710093999 / 8939691888

BRIDE WANTED for an Army Officer, Saiva Pillai, Age 32 years. Rasi: Kadakam. Star: Ayilyam. Contact No: 82487 00585

TELUGU

HINDU, Specialist Doctor MBBS, MS. Reddy 32 Y/165cm Fair, slim. From Affluent family settled in Chennai. Seeks well educated Groom from Similar Background. Professional/ Business/ Entrepreneur. CNB. 8925640111

NAIDU ISSULESS DIVORCE 1975,Working as Ofcr in TN PSU. Seeks Groom Preferably Chennai, CNB– 8778873501

KAMMA 41 Divorced Ph.D Visakam, Thulam seeks educated groom 7904501004 / 9942363464, vnimavathi@gmail.com

TELUGU

BALIJA NAIDU Ashwini 23/168 B. Tech, M.Tech good looking seeks Professional Qual working in IT, Corporate, Banking sector/Govt ct: 9940224519

NAIDU 29/165, Fair & Very Beautiful, MBBS, MD–Doing, Educated Affluent Family, CNB. 7299576644, 7299576666

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TELUGU

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✔ **TELUGU BRAHMIN** Girl 1984/BTech/ Employed. Need professional, unmarried, any Brahmin Boy in India or USA. Ph: 9791111321/9445623800.

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THE HINDU
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Uninterrupted power supply a distant dream

According to recent data, the installed power generation capacity in Karnataka is roughly over 30,000 MW and around 45% of this is renewable energy

FOCUS BENGALURU

Jahnavi T.R.
BENGALURU

Sometimes power supply is turned off during heavy rains and strong winds as a preventative measure. On days when temperature is high, some lines of Bescom get damaged due to heat. FILE PHOTO

On April 20, the peak demand for power in Karnataka was at 308 million units making it the highest demand ever in recorded history of the State. In the last decade, Karnataka has gone from a power deficit State to power surplus State, majorly due to the shift towards renewable energy (RE). However, what is noteworthy is that despite these claimed improvements, power cuts have neither become a thing of the past nor has the tariff burden on the citizens reduced.

According to recent data, the installed power generation capacity in the State is roughly over 30,000 MW and around 45% of this is renewable energy. In the last few years, there have been strong developments in this sector including the inauguration and completion of Pavagada Solar Park in the years 2018 and 2019 respectively. The park alone is said to be world's third largest photovoltaic solar park with 2,050 MW capacity. The sector has also seen large-scale investments from the private sector.

Weather-related

In Bengaluru, which falls under the jurisdiction of Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom), the weather patterns might have become a little tricky recently, but rain or shine, citizens are sure that there will be a power interruption. While sometimes the power supply is turned off during heavy rains and winds as a preventative measure, on days when temperature is higher, some lines of Bescom get damaged due to the heat. The quantum of power does not factor in, when it comes to weather-related reasons.

Power infrastructure

The citizens by far, have been extensively demanding that Bescom should work on improving its infrastructure before anything else. "Every day, in Bengaluru, there are power disruptions. To attract votes, parties have been promising free power and uninterrupted power, but no party is looking at the infrastructure problem. Sure, we have generation, but what about the infrastructure necessary for distribution and transmission?" asked M.G. Prabhakar, former member of the advisory committee, State Electricity Regulatory Commission.

"There might be good availability of power, but there is no infrastructure to support it. There needs to be efficiency improvement when it comes to infrastructure to ensure that there is no outage during peak demand," said Shrinath Bhandary U. Chairman, Energy Committee, KASSIA.

Karnataka Votes 2023

When it comes to transmission issues, the Energy department argues that the transmission grids in the State to both evacuate and input power, are of very good quality. Then what causes outages?

"There has been a boom (10-15% increase) in the consumption of power in the State across all sectors (domestic, industrial, commercial and agricultural). While some are preventive outages, the other times it is due to the distribution transformers getting overloaded, which is progressively reducing now," said Kapil Mohan, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department.

Power surplus

He added that power surplus does not necessarily mean surplus at all times due to natural factors and fluctuating demand. "In summer, the demand shoots up and at those times, we are required to buy power, even if it is in small quantities. But come monsoon, hydel plants will be at full capacity and demand goes down and then, we would be able to sell power," Mr. Mohan said.

Although tariff revision has not happened yet this year due to elections, the proposals have asked for an increase in fixed cost.

In the last decade, the tariffs have been going up irrespective of governments. This time, Congress has promised 200 units of free power to all households in the State, that the BJP has attacked as "imprudent". Prior to the elections, the Energy department had instructed KPTCL and escoms to arrange power to ensure that there is no load-shedding during summer. Bescom officials said they have been following it accordingly and power cuts should not be confused for outages. "Small interruptions will obviously be there. On a larger perspective, there have been no outages," an official said.

(In this series, we look at the major infrastructural issues affecting the city and how recent governments have dealt with them.)

Traffic bottleneck and water shortage among major problems facing residents of Yelahanka

KEY CONSTITUENCY

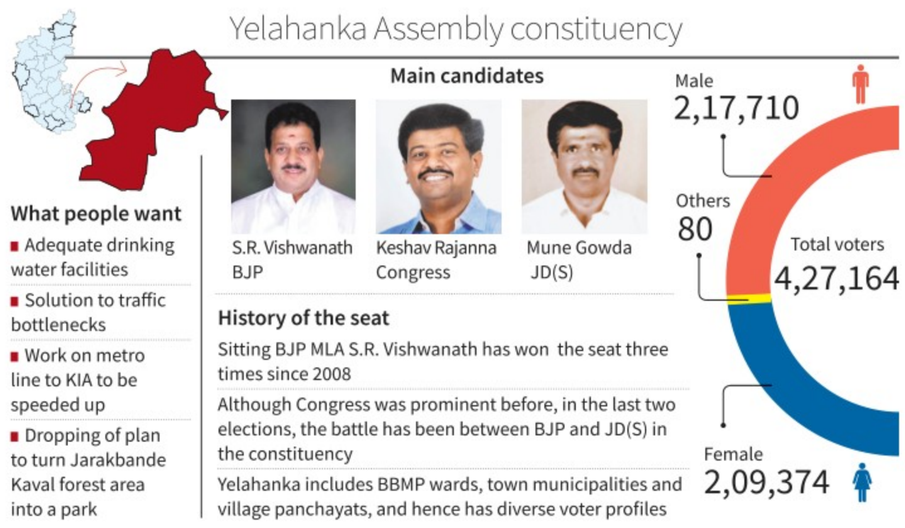
The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Stretched across 31 square kilometres, Yelahanka is a constituency which includes urban areas in city limits, town municipalities and gram panchayats.

S.R. Vishwanath of the ruling BJP has been the MLA of Yelahanka since 2008, when the constituency was made a general seat from being reserved for Scheduled Castes earlier. While his approachability and lack of a good Opposition candidate has held him in good stead, now, he faces some anti-incumbency. However, this time too, the candidates against him from JDS and Congress are perceived to be not well placed to encash anti-incumbency against the incumbent MLA.

Tough fight

Opposition to Mr. Vishwanath is felt the most in 17 villages where land is now being acquired by Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) to form Dr. Shivaram Karanth Layout. "It is not easy for Mr. Vishwanath to win this time. There is a lot of anger amongst farmers who have lost their lands, those who have bought revenue sites and also environmentalists as many trees have been cut in the layout area. The MLA who should have stood in support of us, is the one who has brought JCBs and acquiring land and cutting trees now. No one is showing their displeasure openly, but there is definite opposition," said B.R. Nanjundappa, a former councillor. Given that Mr. Vishwanath has been the chairman of BDA, more anger is directed at him. Apart from this pocket, he has also been facing opposition for the proposed tree park in Jarakbande Kaval forest area, by citizens and environmentalists alike.


Yelahanka Assembly constituency
Main candidates
S.R. Vishwanath
BJP
Keshav Rajanna
Congress
Mune Gowda
JD(S)
What people want
Adequate drinking water facilities
Solution to traffic bottlenecks
Work on metro line to KIA to be speeded up
Dropping of plan to turn Jarakbande Kaval forest area into a park
History of the seat
Sitting BJP MLA S.R. Vishwanath has won the seat three times since 2008
Although Congress was prominent before, in the last two elections, the battle has been between BJP and JD(S) in the constituency
Yelahanka includes BBMP wards, town municipalities and village panchayats, and hence has diverse voter profiles
Male
2,17,710
Others
80
Total voters
4,27,164
Female
2,09,374

Past results

	Winner	Votes polled Vote share	Runner-up	Votes polled Vote share	Third place	Votes polled Vote share
2018	S. R. Vishwanath BJP	1,20,110 49%	A. M. Hanumanthe Gowda JD-(S)	77,607 31.66%	M. N. Gopalakrishna Congress	1,449 16.91%
2013	S. R. Vishwanath BJP	75,507 38.5%	B. Chandrappa JD(S)	57,110 29.12%	Gopalakrishna Congress	52,372 26.7%

There is widespread opposition from residents and environmentalists to the acquisition of land by Bengaluru Development Authority to form Dr. Shivaram Karanth Layout

Problems of citizens

However, apart from these, Mr. Vishwanath seems to face no virulent opposition. Given the wide demography of the constituency, problems faced by citizens also vary. While those in the urban pockets are worried about streetlights, skywalks and other civic amenities, those in rural areas are more worried about lack of sanitation facilities.

However, the problem of paucity drinking water remains common for everyone across the constituency. There is large scale dependency on borewells for drinking water needs. Even apartment complexes and gated communities shell out money for water tankers when the water from the borewells is not sufficient.

The ongoing construction work for the new flyover from Yelahanka Police station to BWSSB junction has made traffic snarls in the area common. Although the airport line of metro is planned to run through Yelahanka, the slow progress of the work has left citizens cynical. "Many of us who have been living here for a long time feel like that flyover was not necessary. It has created a traffic problem which was not there earlier. Metro might benefit the future generations but for now, the construction of the same will again mean traffic snarls. Whoever is elected next, must work with other civic bodies to figure out solutions for the main roads of the constituency without bringing in more construction activities," said Raju S., a resident of Puttenahalli.

While Mr. Vishwanath has faced anti-incumbency in both 2013 and 2018, he has been able to romp home with an increasing margin of victory every election, for which voters of the constituency cite lack of good alternatives. This is also a constituency where JDS is the runner up and Congress has come third in the last two elections.

With also holding the position of BDA chairman, he has brought about several projects to the constituency including connecting roads to Shivaram Karanth Layout, two flyovers on Doddaballapur Road among others.

However, this year, along with the aforementioned problems, if the Opposition parties concentrate on solutions for these issues, the votes might turn in their favour.

Id-ul-Fitr

Several Muslims greet one another after offering namaz at Chamarajpet playground, in Bengaluru on Saturday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Virat Kohli, Anushka visit Central Tiffin Room in Malleswaram

Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma were surprise guests at the Central Tiffin Room in Bengaluru on Saturday. CTR INSTAGRAM

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Central Tiffin Room (CTR), famous for its crispy dosas in Malleswaram, had surprise guests on Saturday. In walked noted cricketer and city's Indian Premiere League team Royal Challengers Bangalore player Virat Kohli, and his wife, Anushka Sharma, Bollywood actor-producer, with their family and friends to have dosas.

While Mr. Kohli is in the city for the ongoing IPL season, Ms. Sharma is a Bengalurean and an alumna of Mount Carmel College.

"It was a great pleasure having the legendary Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma visit us with their family. Your words and wishes have raised our spirits and made our day! Looking forward to having you again," wrote CTR on its social media handles.

They also posted a message left by the couple in which they said they had "a wonderful time sitting and eating peacefully with friends and family".

Man stabbed to death

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

A person was found murdered in Bhadravati late night on Friday. He has been identified as Naveen, 25. Shivamogga Superintendent of Police G.K. Mithun Kumar and other senior officers visited the place. The police have taken two people into custody for interrogation. Hosamane Police have registered the case.

Senior advocate, labour leader K. Subba Rao passes away

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

K. Subba Rao

Senior advocate and labour leader K. Subba Rao, 92, who had fought for the rights of workers for about 60 years, passed away here on Friday. He leaves behind his wife Susheela Rao and daughter Maya Rao.

A household name among the workers' community, he had argued on behalf of freedom fighters N.L. Upadyaya, S. Suryanarayan Rao, M.S. Krishnan and M.C. Narasimhan, which had led to their release from prison.

He had fought for democratic rights when Emergency was imposed in the country, a CITU release said. "Through writ of habeas corpus, he had exposed arrests of senior activists during Emergency. He had helped workers of various public sector undertakings in the city besides members of various other unions in other factories," said CITU.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified that, my clients have agreed to purchase the Schedule property from its Owner **Sri.M.Shankarnarayan** S/o late B.Munivenkatappa, residing at: No.679/1, Indiranagar 1st Stage, 9th 'A' Main, Bengaluru – 560038.

Apart from the said Owner, if any other person/s have any manner of right, title and or interest or claim or charge or lien over the Schedule property or otherwise have any lawful objection/s for sale of the Schedule Property by the aforesaid Owner, they are hereby called upon to file their objection/s in writing, along with the photocopies of documents on which they rely, with the undersigned, within 14days from the date of publication of this notice. Objection/s received thereafter will not be binding on my clients.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the vacant residential property bearing **Municipal No.15** (old No.1/B) PID No.49-52-15,admeasuring 2084.5 Sq.ft., situated at Karnikara Road, 5th Cross Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore and bounded on:

East by : Karnikara Road
West by : Property of legal heirs of late B.M. Ramamurthy and property bearing No.1 & 1/1 of Sri.Manjunath A.R.
North by : 5th Cross Road
South by : Property of Sri. M. Janardhan.

Sd/- Goutam Chand S.F
Advocate
Goutam Associates
No.60, 2nd Floor, Kanakapura Road,
Basavanagudi, Bangalore – 560 004

PUBLIC NOTICE

Our client K. George Prabhu S/o S.Kulandaisamy is negotiating to purchase the residential property bearing **Site No.742, measuring East to West 24.20 meter, North to South 15.10 meter,** in all measuring **365.42 meter,** layout formed by Bengaluru Development Authority at **11th Block, Nagarabhavi 2nd Stage, Bengaluru,** presently, coming under the **BBMP Kottigepalya Ward No.73,** which is more fully described in the Schedule hereunder, from its present owner **Sri Praveen Kumar S/o Madanlal Jain,** r/at No.13, 38th Cross, 5th Main, 5th Block, Jayanagara, Bengaluru-560041.

It is claimed that **Sri Praveen Kumar S/o Madanlal Jain** is the absolute owner of the Schedule Property and the same was acquired by him under a registered conveyance vide document bearing **No.16286/2001-02, Book-I, Volume No.482, Pages 147 to 152, dated: 08.03.2002,** registered in the office of the Additional District Registrar, Bengaluru, from Bengaluru Development Authority, he represent that no encumbrance of any nature, statutory or otherwise subsists in respect of Schedule Property.

This is to give notice to the public that any person who claims any right, title or interest of any nature in or any lien, charge or enforceable right in relation to Schedule Property and/or has any objections of any nature to the proposed transaction or is in possession or claims any right there under, should lodge such claim and/or objections, in writing, with the undersigned together with supporting documents within **TEN DAYS** from date of this publication, failing which, it will be presumed that no valid claims or objections subsist and our client would proceed to complete the transaction, subject to clear title and compliance with other statutory formalities.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All the piece and parcel of the residential property bearing **site No.742**, BBMP Katha No.741, measuring **East to West 24.20 meter, North to South 15.10 meter,** in all measuring **365.42 meter,** layout formed by Bengaluru Development Authority at **11th Block, Nagarabhavi 2nd Stage, Bengaluru,** presently, coming under the **BBMP Kottigepalya Ward No.73** and bounded on:

East by : Site No.712, West by : Road, North by : Private Property, South by : Site No.741.

From **D.Venkatesh,** Advocate
No.441, 2nd Cross, 3rd Block, 3rd Stage,
Basaveshwaranagara, Bangalore.
Cell: 9945208081, venkteshd@gmail.com

Mystic voice: Panchuruli performs an 'exorcism' at Sri Karimchamundiyamma Devasthanam, Odayamchal in Kasaragod district.

Fierce contrast: *Mukhathezhuthu* is the intricate art of painting the faces of Theyyam performers.

Smouldering faith: Oracles jump into a pyre in a trance of devotion at Sri Karimchamundiyamma Devasthanam, Odayamchal.

Primal themes: A performance starts at night and goes on till the early hours. In this period, the performer dons several costumes, in this case, the form of a boar.

Supernatural authority: During the ritual, oracles call upon spirits and forecast events or act as moral advisers.

Five of family die in accident on Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway

The Ramanagara police say the car was probably overspeeding, and following a tyre-burst the driver lost control leading to the mishap

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Five members of a family were killed in an accident on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway, near Lambani Tanda, in Channapatna taluk of Ramanagara district on Saturday.

The deceased have been identified as Ravi Pujar, 45, who was behind the wheel, his wife Lakshmi Pujar, 40, and their children Inchara Pujar, 15, Shantala Pujar, 10, and Siri Pujar, 3.

The car that was involved in an accident on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway on Saturday.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Ravi Pujar was an employee of the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, and the family lived in Kengeri. The accident occurred when the family was on its way to T. Narsipur in Mysuru district.

The Ramanagara police said that the car was probably overspeeding and following a tyre-burst Mr. Ravi Pujar lost control, resulting in the accident. The car swung across the expressway and landed on the opposite lane to collide head-on with a SUV coming from Mysuru towards Bengaluru. The impact of the collision was such that the front portion of the car was completely damaged. Soon, passersby rushed to the rescue of the family and removed them from the mangled remains of the car.

Mr. Ravi Pujar was killed on the spot. His daughters --- Inchara and Siri --- passed away while being taken to a hospital. Ms. Lakshmi Pujar and another daughter Shantala Pujar were taken to NIMHANS in Bengaluru, but they too died later in the day.

Overspeeding and the increasing number of accidents on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway have been a growing concern ever since the expressway was thrown open to the public recently.

A senior police official said that as the expressway provided a free right of way, unlike the old highway, many were prone to overspeeding, leading to accidents.

Three of family drown in lake in Ramanagara district

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Three members of a family, who had gone to wash their sheep, drowned in a lake and died at Muttasagar village of Magadi taluk in Ramanagara district.

Identified
The deceased were identified as Nagaraju, 30, Jyothi, 35, and Lakshmi, 22, of Gollarahatti village.

Bodies fished out
The accident occurred when they went to wash their sheep in the lake. Rescuers from Fire and Emergency Services rushed to the spot and fished out the dead bodies.

Case registered
A case has been registered in Kuduru police station.

DC visits Hakki-Pikki hamlets as 108 are stuck in Sudan

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

With over 100 Hakki-Pikki tribes from Mysuru stuck in violence-hit Sudan, Deputy Commissioner K.V. Rajendra visited Tiger Block, one of the hamlets of the nomadic group in H.D. Kote taluk, and spoke to the residents. He later visited Pakshirajapura in Hunsur taluk and spoke to the relatives of those stranded in the African nation.

As many as 108 Hakki-Pikki community people are said to be stuck in Sudan and efforts are on to bring them back safely to India. The Deputy Commissioner visited the hamlets on Friday and told the relatives on the efforts being made by the government for their evacuation.

The tribes who are known for traditional medicines went to Sudan supporting their remedies among the locals.

The relatives are learnt to have told the Deputy Commissioner on the plight of those stuck in Sudan and lack of basic amenities essential for their living. A helpline (1077) has been launched for sharing information on the stranded persons in Sudan

Two arrested for stealing cricket kits from Delhi Capitals IPL team

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Delhi Capitals Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket team, who were in the city to play in the ongoing IPL tournament, found two of their cricket kits missing after they were shifted from ITC Gardenia, where the team was staying, to Kempegowda International Airport.

Acting on a complaint by Anand Agarwal, Managing Director of Express Freight System India, that transported these cricket kits, Cubbon Park Police have now arrested the driver of the vehicle that transported these kits and a courier boy who stole two kits, one for each of them.

The police have arrested the driver Cheluvaraju, 30, a resident of Chellaghatta and the courier boy Sudhanshu Kumar Naik, 30, hailing from Odisha and recovered the two cricket kits worth ₹16 lakh.

The police seized 12 bats, 18 balls, 4 hand gloves, 2 helmets, 3 leg pads, 2 thigh pads, 1 centre guard and 1 bag from the accused.

Delhi Capitals captain and Australian player David Warner took to social media to say, "They found the culprits. A few missing, but still thank you".

Accused wanted in 30 criminal cases held

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

The Mangaluru City police have arrested Siddaraju alias 'Rowdy' Siddu, 53, a native of Mysuru, who is allegedly involved in 30 criminal cases, including 13 thefts. Police Commissioner Kuldeep Kumar R. Jain told reporters here recently, that the Central Crime Branch sleuths arrested Siddaraju a week ago from a hide out in Bengaluru.

During the questioning, Siddaraju revealed about carrying out thefts in different parts of Karnataka in association with one Puneet, a native of Shivamogga district. Puneet has been arrested by Chikkamagaluru police, he said.

He has been involved in a total of 30 criminal cases, includes cases of murder, harassment and attempt to murder.

Timings
BENGALURU

SUNDAY, APR. 23		
RISE	06:03	SET 18:33
RISE	08:19	SET 21:37
MONDAY, APR. 24		
RISE	06:03	SET 18:33
RISE	09:10	SET 22:32
TUESDAY, APR. 25		
RISE	06:02	SET 18:33
RISE	10:02	SET 23:26

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	35	25
Mysuru	35	24
Bengaluru	36	24

Bengaluru Today
36°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be very warm and uneasy. Night also will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
36°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be pleasant with mist & haze. Day will be very warm and uneasy. Night also will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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- Applications are available at the college website www.psgcas.ac.in.
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- On fourth day from the publication of 12th results of TNHSE the admission counselling for the special category (sports, NCC, Ex-servicemen and Disability) will be done according to the ranking of applied candidates under the respective category.
- Spot admission programmes are listed in the website, admission counselling for spot admission programmes will be done from the first day of publication of respective board results.

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Siddaramaiah highlights Congress' promise of free rice, electricity

Seeking votes: Congress leader Siddaramaiah greeting the crowd at Chinnamballi during his campaign in Varuna constituency in Mysuru district on Saturday. M.A. SRIRAM

R. Krishna Kumar
MYSURU

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

He flags 'danger' to constitution if BJP is voted to power

Former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah hit the campaign trail in the searing heat and rising dust at Varuna constituency, spread across parts of Mysuru, Nanjangud, and T. Narsipura on Saturday.

Reckoned to be his first full-fledged campaign confined entirely to his own constituency after the filing of nomination papers and completion of scrutiny, Mr. Siddaramaiah landed at Suttur helipad a couple of hours behind schedule.

After the customary exchange of greetings and pleasantries with local party leaders, his convoy took the serpentine route through villages, some of which are far flung and nestled amidst paddy and sugarcane fields while most settlements are ensconced in dry and parched lands.

Unmindful of the soaring mercury levels people gathered on both sides of the road to greet the Congress leader as he made a whirlwind tour touching Karya, Karepura, Haadya, Banuru, and Chinnamballi.

Epithets

At Chinnamballi he was greeted with deafening cheers as slogans describing him as "Mysuru huli", "Mundina Mukhya Mantri", and "Bandavara Bandhu" rent the air. Though supposed to reach Chinnamballi at 1.30 p.m., Mr. Siddaramaiah was behind schedule by more than 90 minutes but that did not deter the people from patiently waiting to get a glimpse of their leader and listen to his speech.

He waved at the crowd, shook hands with those he is acquainted and addressed the crowd highlighting the Congress manifesto and promise of providing 10 kg rice for free, 200 units free power, and unemployment doles to the youth besides ₹2,000 for women heading the household which evoked loud cheers from the crowd, which was a mix of youngsters, women, and senior citizens.

The focus of the greater part of his speeches used to be on the Congress guarantee card with its promises and how the people of the constituency had "blessed" him in the past and sought the same support during the forthcoming elections as well. Moving on from Chinnamballi, the convoy reached Tagadur which is relatively prosperous where a massive crowd had gathered to greet Mr. Siddaramaiah.

Focus of speech

The thrust of his speech was again on the Congress promises, besides touching upon the failure of the BJP in addressing issues of price rise and unemployment. At all places he flagged the "danger" to the Constitution if the BJP was not voted out of power.

Tagadur was followed by similar outreach at Varahalli, Chunchanahalli, Hanumapura – areas where agriculture is under rain-fed conditions. A portion of the constituency is irrigated by the Varuna canal where agriculture flourishes and is the main source of occupation. But in rest of the constituency, there is a perceptible shift towards non-agricultural sector, mainly construction and hence issues related to employment generation matters.

The itinerary for the day included covering 16 gram panchayats and major settlements in what is a familiar terrain as the constituency is being represented by his son Yathindra since 2018 before which Mr. Siddaramaiah himself was elected in 2008 and 2013.

Old political rivals swap places and set stage for a keen battle

The fight in Athani Assembly constituency appears to be between two powerful 'sahukars' and not parties

KEY CONSTITUENCY

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
BELAGAVI

Athani, a small town on the Karnataka-Maharashtra border, has become a constituency to look out for this Assembly election with the traditional political opponents – Mahesh Kumathalli and Laxman Savadi – having swapped parties.

Mr. Kumathalli is the BJP candidate who is pitted against Mr. Savadi, now in the Congress. This was the other way round in the 2018 polls.

Mr. Savadi, a former Deputy Chief Minister and a three-time BJP MLA for Athani, joined the Congress last week. This was after he got clear signals from the BJP that it would re-nominate Mr. Kumathalli, who had joined the party through 'Operation Lotus' in 2019. Mr. Savadi quit his membership of the Legislative Council and the party primary membership and joined the Congress.

Jarkiholi loyalist

Mr. Savadi's long-time opponent Mr. Kumathalli is a known loyalist of Ramesh Jarkiholi, former Irrigation Minister and the eldest of the powerful Gokak brothers. Mr. Ramesh Jarkiholi has announced that he would spend more time campaigning in Athani than in his own constituency of Gokak. He is also visiting houses of BJP workers who are expected to follow Mr. Savadi into Congress. On his part, Mr. Savadi is busy touring villages. He says his campaign had begun long ago, as he organised several meetings of various community leaders, before making the switch to the Congress.

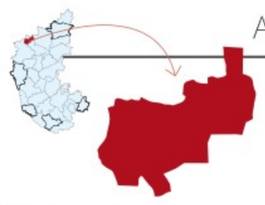
Athani is one of the most fertile taluks of northern Karnataka with black cotton soil and two rivers flowing through it --- Krishna and its tributary, Agrani. Introduction of lift irrigation, drip irrigation, and tank-filling programmes have increased the area under sugarcane. Cane growers feed not only the five sugar factories in the four hobli towns in Athani, but also some factories in Maharashtra. The taluk is largely rural, with over 84% of the population living in villages. The Panchamasalis, who are the traditional land holders in the villages, are said to be in relatively larger numbers than other Lingayat groups. The BJP nominee Mr. Kumathalli is a Panchamasali while Mr. Savadi is a Ganiga Lingayat.

Between 'Sahukars'

The defections and counter-defections of leaders and workers in Athani may have caught the eye of the people in the State. But it seems to matter little for the voters here. They see it as a fight between the two "Sahukars": Savadi Sahukar and Jarkiholi Sahukar. Mr. Kumathalli is seen only as a titular head, in this battle. It seems that the modern-day battle of Athani is between individuals and not parties.

The taluk has an interesting history. Established in 1853, the Athani town municipal council is one of the oldest in the State. The Ghorpade kings of Jamakhandi defeated Kashimulla Khan, a Mughal general in the Athani battle fought on the large plains of the Krishna in 1690. Johan Mandelslo, a German chronicler of the 17th century, notes that Athani was a market town between Miraj, Bijapur, and Goa.

An interesting trivia is that former Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde chose Athani as a safe seat for former Minister Hulikuntemath Leeladevi Renuka Prasad or Leeladevi R. Prasad in 1985. She went on to win the 1994 polls too. Ms. Prasad who served as a Bangalore city corporation member in 1956, was a well-known writer and speaker on vachana literature. That Ms. Prasad's father hailed from Dharwad helped her. He had worked for decades in organising the Veerashaiva Mahasabha events in the villages. She has maintained her contacts in Athani and visits the town regularly.



Athani Assembly constituency

What people want

- Timely completion of pending irrigation schemes and tank-filling scheme
- Grape growers demand cold storage and an exclusive market for raisins
- Upgrading the town municipal council into city municipal council
- Completion of government agriculture and veterinary colleges that were sanctioned long ago

Main candidates

Laxman Savadi
Congress

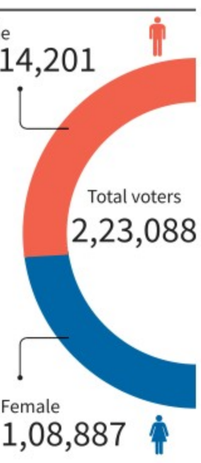
Mahesh Kumathalli
BJP

History of the seat

Since 1952, Congress has won nine elections, BJP four times, and Janata Parivar parties twice.

Candidates of Congress and BJP have swapped parties

Leeladevi R. Prasad, former Minister of Kannada and Culture and former member of the Bengaluru Bruhat Mahanagara Palike won from Athani in 1985 and 1994.



Past results

	Winner	Votes polled Vote share	Runner-up	Votes polled Vote share	Third place	Votes polled Vote share
2019 by-poll	Mahesh Kumathalli BJP	99,203 60%	Gajanan B.	59,214 36%	Shrishail Halladamal Independent	1,892 1.15%
2018	Mahesh Kumathalli Congress	82,094 48.13%	Laxman Savadi BJP	79,763 46.76%	Girish Butali JD(S)	3,381 1.98%
2013	Laxman Savadi BJP	74,299 50.79%	Mahesh Kumathalli Congress	50,528 34.54%	Sadashiv Butali JD(S)	15,204 10.39%

H.D. Kumaraswamy

HDK develops fever, advised rest

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Janata Dal (Secular) leader and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy was admitted to a private hospital on Saturday after he developed high fever and doctors advised him rest.

In a statement, the party said that uninterrupted campaign in the heat had affected his health and that he had been admitted in Manipal Hospital here. The statement added that he would resume campaigning after doctors' give him the go-ahead. "Party workers need not worry about my health," Mr. Kumaraswamy said.

The JD(S) leader had been campaigning in Hassan and other parts of South Karnataka.

Voter helpline receives 12,121 calls

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

According to data provided by the Election Commission, the voter helpline has received 12,121 calls of which 11,984 people have sought information, 28 have given feedback, 27 have made suggestions, and 172 have registered complaints.

All 12,121 calls have been disposed of, as per a release from the office of the CEO. In addition, 6,814 complaints have been registered by citizens on the NGRS portal, out of which, 6,515 complaints have been disposed of, said the release.

These apart, 4,993 complaints have been received through cVIGIL application.

Major complaints

Major complaints received are related to posters and banners without permission (2,787), and others are related to money distribution, posters without mandatory declaration, display of firearms, intimidation, distribution of gifts/coupons, distribution of liquor, property defacement, and vehicle or convoy without permission. "Out of these 4,214 complaints are found to be correct and action has been taken," said the release.

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

S.GOVINDARAJAN RETIRED Officer State Bank of India 87 years old attained Achariyan Thiruvadi on 17th April 2023. Deeply mourned by Family and Relatives. 9840784856

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

10TH ANNIVERSARY

DR. B. JAYARAMAN
Retd. CGM NABARD
DOB: 10/10/1951 – DOD: 23/04/2013

The pain of your death never goes away, no matter how many years pass. Your memories have become our heartbeats – which means we are thinking of you all the time just to stay alive. Rest well. Till we meet again. Miss you a lot.

REMEMBERED BY
Mahalakshmi, Rajiv, Veena, Jayashree, Venkat, Simba, Aspen.
Relatives & Friends

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my client intends to purchase the property described in the schedule hereunder from its present owner **Sri. Mujeeb Ur Rahman,** son of Sri Abdul Basher, residing at No.295, Thimmaiah Road, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru North, Bengaluru- 560051, he having purchased the same from the Bangalore Development Authority under an Auction Sale Deed dated 09.06.2014 registered as Document No. BDA-1-00801/2014-15 in Book I, stored in CD No.BDAD203 in the office of the Additional District Registrar, Bangalore City District.

All persons having or claiming any right, title, estate or interest by way of inheritance, share, sale, mortgage, transfer, lease, tenancy, lien, charge, trust, maintenance, easement, gift, devise, bequest, exchange, pre-emption, possession or encumbrance or otherwise howsoever into or upon the Schedule Property herein below described are called upon to intimate the same in writing to the undersigned at the below given address along with all the documents relating to such claim, within **14 days** from the date of publication of this notice, failing which any such claim of any party shall be deemed to have been waived for all legal practical purposes and shall not be entertained hereafter and I shall opine that the Schedule Property is free of any claims and my client will be free to proceed with the proposed purchase of the Schedule Property.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of Auction **Site No.2BC-805** measuring East to West: 18 mtrs and North to South: 12 mtrs, in all measuring **216 sq. mtrs** (2325 sq.ft) having PID No.84-138-2BC-805 formed by the Bangalore Development Authority in East of N.G.E.F Layout, in Sy.No.36/1 situated in Benniganahalli Village, Bengaluru together with a residential building standing thereon consisting of ground, first and second floors and the same is bounded on:

East by : 2BC - Road
West by : Private Property
North by : Site No. 2BC-807
South by : Site No. 2BC-803

Vivek Anand Anthony Britto
Vir Anthony Britto
Advocates
"Daisville", 633, 5th Main, Indiranagar II Stage, Bengaluru-560038
Place: Bengaluru Date: 22.04.2023

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICER AND DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KOPPAL
Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election - 2023
PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the below mentioned General Observer, Expenditure Observer and Police Observers have arrived in Koppal District. The Place of stay, Meeting Hours and Contact Information is given below;

Election Observers Details

Sl No	No & Name Assembly Constituency	Name of Observer	Place of Stay	Public Meeting Time	Place of Public Meeting
1	60- Kushtagi	Sri Swapnil M. Naik, IAS Mob No: 9380294275	I B, Koppal	Monday 10.00 AM to 12.30 PM Wednesday 10.00 AM to 12.30 PM Friday 10.00 AM to 12.30 PM	Office of the Returning Officer Kushtagi
	61-Kanakagiri			Monday 02.00 PM to 04.30 PM Wednesday 02.00 PM to 04.30 PM Friday 02.00 PM to 04.30 PM	Office of the Returning Officer Kanakagiri
2	62-Gangavathi & 63-Yelburga	Sri V. Sampath, IAS Mob No: 9380251638	I B, Koppal	Everyday 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM	I B, Koppal
3	64-Koppal	Sri Bhanu Prakash Yeturu, IAS Mob No: 9380286007	I B, Koppal	Everyday 09.30 AM to 11.00 AM	I B, Koppal

Expenditure Observers Details

Sl No	No & Name Assembly Constituency	Name of Observer	Place of Stay	Public Meeting Time	Place of Public Meeting
1	60- Kushtagi	Sri. G. Vivekanand, IRS (C & CE) Mob No: 9113026380	I B, Kushtagi	Monday 09.00 AM to 10.00 AM Wednesday 09.00 AM to 10.00 AM Friday 09.00 AM to 10.00 AM	I B, Kushtagi
	61-Kanakagiri			Monday 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM Wednesday 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM Friday 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM	
2	62-Gangavathi	Dr. A. Venkadesh Babu, IRS Mob No: 9113005210	I B, Gangavathi	Everyday 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM	I B, Gangavathi
3	63-Yelburga	Sri. S.R. Nedumaran, IRS Mob No: 9113022689	I B, Kuknoor	Monday 10.00 AM to 11.30 AM Wednesday 10.00 AM to 11.30 AM Friday 10.00 AM to 11.30 AM	I B, Kuknoor
	64- Koppal			Tuesday 10.00 AM to 11.30 AM Thursday 10.00 AM to 11.30 AM Saturday 10.00 AM to 11.30 AM	Office of the Returning Officer Koppal

Police Observer Details

Sl No	District	Name of Observer	Place of Stay	Public Meeting Time	Place of Public Meeting
1	Koppal	Shri Manoj Tiwari, IPS Mob No: 8277978606	I B, Koppal	Everyday 09.30 AM to 10.30 AM	I B, Koppal

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BJP may not declare a Lingayat for CM post

Amit Shah is said to have expressed reservations over making such a blanket announcement. The party will, however, take up a large-scale on-ground outreach in the community

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A file photo of the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has reportedly expressed reservations about openly declaring that the BJP will make a member of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community the Chief Minister if the party is voted to power. Such an announcement will potentially make other communities who vote for the party feel they have no stakes and may work against the party's interests, Mr. Shah opined, sources in the meeting presided over by him said.

Following the defections of the former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and the former Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi, and their attack on the party that Lingayats were being sidelined, B.S. Yediyurappa, whose replacement has already caused disaffection in the community, had chaired a meeting of the party's Lingayat leaders on Thursday night. It was suggested there that the party announce that it would make a Lingayat the Chief Minister if voted to power. Arun Singh, in charge of party affairs in the State, had hinted at the same on Friday.

While Mr. Shah was reportedly not for such a blanket announcement, he asked the party to take up a large-scale on-ground outreach to the community. Mr. Yediyurappa and V. Somanna will lead efforts at liaising with Veerashaiva-Lingayat mutts across the State to mobilise support from the community to the party, sources said. Mr. Shah asked the party to reach out to even smaller mutts of the community, remind them of the historical relationship between the community and the party, the patronage the community and the mutts have received from the party and galvanise support. Panchamasali Lingayat leaders such as Murugesh Nirani and C.C. Patil have been tasked to ensure the community's votes do not splinter away, sources said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Shah asked party leaders in the State to also launch a counter-offensive against the Congress over their alleged ill-treatment of Veerendra Patil and S. Nijalingappa and corner the party asking if they would make a member of the community Chief Minister if elected to power.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had earlier in the campaign attacked the Congress over how it allegedly ill-treated Lingayat leaders in the past, will likely also pick on the theme, sources said. The Prime Minister will likely visit a few prominent Lingayat mutts over the next two weeks.

To defeat 'traitors'

Mr. Shah reportedly spent considerable time reviewing strategy to defeat the three defectors – Mr. Shettar, Mr. Savadi, and Ayanur Manjunath, all Lingayats. The BJP will brand them "traitors" not only to the party but also to the Lingayat community, for joining the Congress that "ill-treated Lingayats".

Mr. Shah reportedly directed the State unit to take up extensive outreach programmes in their constituencies to defeat them. Sources in the party said that teams of the party and RSS workers from outside the State would be stationed in these three constituencies to aid and boost the morale of the local workers, to help them defeat the three defectors.

PM writes to Basava Samiti

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 20 wrote to the Basava Samiti wishing them the best on the occasion of Global Basava Jayanti-2023 celebrations on Sunday.

He said he considers himself "blessed to have been part of various events associated with the teachings and messages of Jagadguru Basaveshwara" and recalled that he released translations of the vachanas into various languages and unveiled the statue of the 12th Century social reformer in London.

Yediyurappa's shoes are not easy to fill as community's tall leader

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

Over the last few days, B.Y. Vijayendra, son of the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, and Congress leader M.B. Patil have exchanged barbs over the "treatment" meted out to Lingayats in the BJP. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has also been vociferously defending the party's decision that led to the exit of the former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and the former Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi.

M.B. Patil

B.Y. Vijayendra

Veiled attempts

The exchanges between the two leaders from the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community are being viewed as veiled attempts to position themselves as the community leaders, with Mr. Yediyurappa remaining out of the electoral fray.

What has raised eyebrows is that though Mr. Vijayendra has made multiple moves in the past to claim his father's legacy, Mr. Patil had remained more or less quiet.

After lending the leadership role for a separate Lingayat religion movement in 2017, Mr. Patil had not been vocal on community issues despite his appointment as chairman of the Congress election committee. He, however, is learnt to have had a say in the selection of Lingayat candidates fielded by the party and more recently in getting Mr. Shettar to the Congress.

"Community is watching as to who will emerge to take the leadership role. In that sense, this election is important as to who will stake the claim. However, most of the community leaders have not attempted a pan-Karnataka and pan-community leadership so far," said a senior office-bearer of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat Mahasabha. "Though Lingayats are in good numbers in about 150 constituencies, the community leaders have not grown their influence beyond their constituencies or districts. Mr. Yediyurappa's presence as a towering leader also inhibited their growth."

In this election, KPCC working president Eshwar Khandre, Vinay Kulkarni, and S.S. Mallikarjun along with Mr. Patil fancy a chance to emerge as community leaders from the Congress. Mr. Vijayendra, Mr. Bommai, Industries Minister Murugesh Nirani, Housing Minister V. Somanna, and Arvind Bellad are being tipped to be the leaders in the race in the BJP.

Pan-community leader

Observers also believe that emerging to be a pan-community leader in the current circumstances is difficult since the Veerashiva-Lingayat sub-castes' pressures and aspirations have also changed.

"Mr. Yediyurappa's success post the late Veerendra Patil period was in emerging to be the encompassing leader of the community, which was also aided by the migration of leaders from various Lingayat sub-sects to the BJP after the Janata Dal split in 1999," said a leader.

By bringing Lingayat leaders into the BJP fold, Mr. Yediyurappa also stymied the growth of regional leaders from the community in other parties. In the last two decades, no Lingayat leader barring Mr. Somanna in Bengaluru has been able to emerge from Old Mysore region where there is a substantial Lingayat presence, added the leader.

Siddaramaiah's statement leads to fracas

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A statement made by the former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to a question posed by a television channel on the "Lingayat for Chief Minister" demand has resulted in the ruling BJP training the guns on him.

Asked for his comments on the demand that a Lingayat should become the next Chief Minister, Mr. Siddaramaiah said, "There is already a Lingayat Chief Minister.... He (*avaru*) is at the root of all corruption."

This was interpreted by the television channel as a generic comment on the Lingayat community. Soon, the BJP, from its official Twitter handle carried a clip of this statement and said, "It is unforgivable that the person who once tried to divide the community is now implying that the community is corrupt."

Jumping in, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said the statement of Mr. Siddaramaiah had revealed his "true feelings." "There will soon be a brake on your policy of dividing and ruling," he said in a tweet.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Siddaramaiah lashed out at the BJP for "misinterpreting his statement" and said his comments with particular reference to Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai were being deliberately misinterpreted to imply the whole community. "This is politically motivated and part of the BJP's ploy to gain political benefit out of it," he said.

INBRIEF

Shobha and Shivakumar spar over application fee

Union Minister of State for Agriculture and convener of the BJP's State election management committee Shobha Karandlaje has complained to the Election Commission, alleging that the Congress had collected ₹2 lakh along with the applications by ticket aspirants, and therefore, the nomination papers of all candidates in the State must be rejected.

In a rebuttal, KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar said, "We had collected money upfront. The amount is ₹5,000 for an application and ₹2 lakh for the party building fund. There is no irregularity or '40% commission'. Let the BJP investigate all the complaints and charges involving its leaders such as Nehru Olekar, Basavaraj Patil Yatnal, K.S. Eshwarappa, and Virupakshappa Madal and prove its probity."

Comrades-in-arms

KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly Siddaramaiah at a private event in Bengaluru on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Rahul Gandhi to attend Basava Jayanti programme at Kudalasangama

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

In an attempt to bolster the Congress' Lingayat outreach, party leader Rahul Gandhi is set to participate in the Basava Jayanti celebrations at Kudalasangama, near Hungund, in Bagalkot district on Sunday.

At a press conference, M.B. Patil, Congress State campaign committee chairman, said the former AICC president would arrive at Hubballi airport on Sunday at around 10.30 a.m. He would reach Kudalasangama at around 11.40 a.m.

A file photo of Kudalasangama in Bagalkot district.

He would pay his respects at the Aikya Mantapa and Sri Sangamanatha temple and participate in the Basava Jayanti celebrations at Basava Mantapa. He would have lunch at the Dasoha Bhavana along with other devotees. The Congress leader would stay in the Yatri Nivas till evening. Asked if this was an attempt by the Congress to win over the Lingayat vote in north Karnataka, Mr. Patil said it was "not a political event".

Tontad Siddharama Swami of Gadag, Basavalinga Pattaddevaru of Bhalki Hiremath, Shivacharya Swami of Panchamasali Peetha, and other seers would speak at the programme, he said.

Mr. Gandhi would reach Vijayapura by 5 p.m. and hold a roadshow till 6.30 p.m. He is expected to address the public at Shivaji Circle and Kanakadasa Circle. He will stay overnight in Vijayapura.

BJP's dam has breached, water will flow out and join the sea called Congress: DKS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Many more leaders from the BJP are joining the Congress, says the KPCC chief

As several Veerashaiva-Lingayat leaders have quit the BJP and joined the Congress, KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar took a jibe at the ruling party on Saturday and said, "The BJP's dam has breached and the water will flow out and join the sea called the Congress."

Several prominent BJP leaders, including the former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, the former Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi, and many other legislators have resigned and joined the Congress. On Saturday, former MLAs Vishwanath Patil Hebbal, Aravind Chowhan, and Shivanand Patil joined the Congress.

At a press conference at his residence to announce the admission of the former BJP MLAs, who are also prominent leaders from the North Karnataka region, Mr. Shivakumar said, "Many more leaders are joining the Congress."

The KPCC chief alleged that the Chief Minister's office has been misusing its powers to conspire with authorities in the Election Commission to ensure the rejection of nomination papers in some constituencies to benefit the ruling BJP.

"In Savadatti-Yellamma constituency in Belagavi district, the scrutiny of the nomination papers have been delayed to help the BJP candidate to correct faulty nomination papers," he said.

He sought a probe into all the telephone calls from the Chief Minister's office to the designated Returning Officer.

The Congress leader claimed that the BJP attempted to reject his nomination papers from the Kanakapura constituency. He asked the Election Commission authorities to take note of the misuse of the powers by the BJP.

Staff at checkposts face lack of basic amenities

Sathish G.T.
SHIVAMOGGA

Women government employees, particularly women police officials, posted at checkposts have been facing difficulties due to the lack of basic amenities at their stations. While a few have brought their difficulties to the attention of senior officers concerned, others continue to suffer without raising a voice.

The district administrations have set up checkposts at taluk and district entry points. The staff at the check-posts stop vehicles and check if anybody is carrying cash or valuables, violating the model code of conduct. They work in three shifts, covering 24 hours a day.

A checkpost set up near Shivamogga. Staff deputed at such checkposts work in three shifts. SATHISH G.T.

No toilets

"There are no toilets at our workplace. If the checkposts are close to any village, we could request local people so that we could use the facility at their houses. But our checkpost is far away from human habitation, located on a highway," said a woman employee who wished not to be named.

The local gram panchayats make drinking water available for the staff. The staff members take a break for a few minutes to have food. "If one goes for breakfast, the rest manage the checkpost. And, in some places, the staff have to travel a long distance to find a hotel. We don't bring these things to the attention of senior officers and manage ourselves. But, the administration should make arrangements for toilets," the official said.

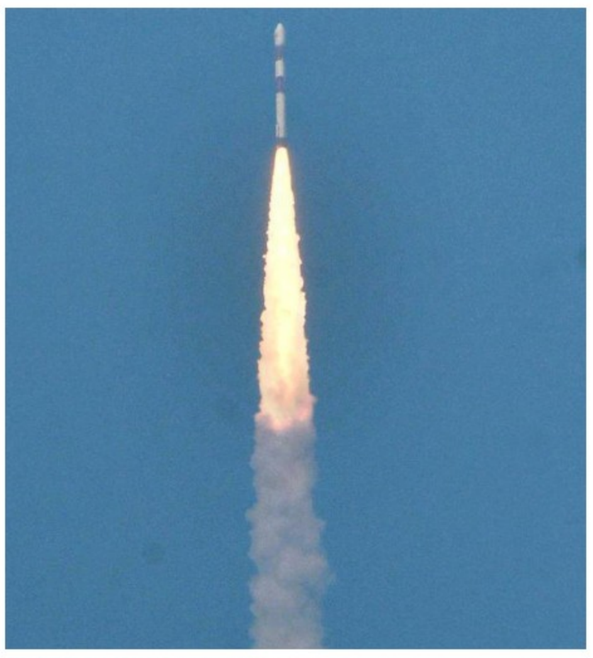
The staff, through their immediate seniors and assistant returning officers, have appealed to the administration to arrange mobile toilets at each checkpost. "Whenever political parties hold huge rallies, organisers make mobile toilets available for the public. If political parties could make such arrangements at events that last for a few hours, why cannot the Election Commission make similar arrangements for the staff members at the checkposts, which remain active 24 hours until the polling day," argued a female employee.

> Whenever political parties hold huge rallies, organisers make mobile toilets available for the public. If political parties could make such arrangements at events that last for a few hours, why cannot the Election Commission make similar arrangements for the staff members at the checkposts?
>
> **A FEMALE STAFFER POSTED AT A CHECKPOST**

When *The Hindu* brought this issue to the attention of Hassan Deputy Commissioner M.S. Archana, the officer said the administration would check the availability of mobile toilets and take further action to carry them to the checkposts.

ISRO launches PSLV-C55 with two Singapore satellites

Sangeetha Kandavel
SRIHARIKOTA



Successful take off: PSLV-C55 lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, on Saturday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

The Indian Space Research Organisation's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C55) carrying two Singapore satellites, TeLEOS-2 as primary satellite and Lumelite-4 as co-passenger, took off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, at 2.19 p.m. on Saturday.

According to details provided by ISRO, PSLV-C55 was a "dedicated commercial PSLV mission of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), for an international satellite customer from Singapore". TeLEOS-2 carries a Synthetic Aperture Radar payload while Lumelite-4 is a technology demonstration nano-satellite. This is the 57th flight of PSLV and 16th mission using the PSLV Core Alone configuration (PSLV-CA).

After the lift-off, ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said the PSLV-C55/TeLEOS-2 mission was accomplished successfully and placed both satellites in the intended orbit.

The TeLEOS-2 was developed under a partnership between DSTA (representing the Government of Singapore) and ST Engineering, a Singapore firm. Once deployed and operational, it will be used to support the satellite imagery requirements of various agencies of Singapore. TeLEOS-2 will be able to provide all-weather day-and-night coverage, and capable of imaging at 1-metre full-polarimetric resolution, the ISRO said.

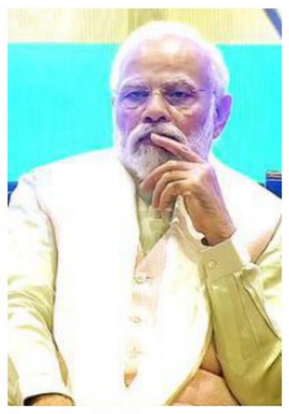
Lumelite-4 was co-developed by the Institute for Infocomm Research (I2R) of Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and Satellite Technology and Research Centre (STAR) of the National University of Singapore. It is an advanced 12U satellite developed for the technological demonstration of the High-Performance Space-borne VHF Data Exchange System (VDES). Using the VDES communication payload developed by I2R and STAR's scalable satellite bus platform, it aims to augment Singapore's e-navigation maritime safety and benefit the global shipping community.

Incidentally, PSLV-C55 mission will carry out in-orbit scientific experiments by using the spent PS4 stage as an orbital platform. This is the third time that PS4 will be used after satellite separations as a platform for experiments. There will be non-separable payloads mounted on MSA (multi satellite adapter). Payloads will be "powered on" by a command after all satellites are separated. The platform will have solar panels mounted around the PS4 tank which will be deployed after confirmation of the stage achieving stabilisation. The deployment of the solar panels will be through a ground command. The platform will ensure that the deployed solar panel points towards the sun optimally using appropriate sun-pointing mode, which will increase the power generation capability of the platform. The power will be provided to payloads and avionic packages based on their requirements, the ISRO said.

Death threat to PM and 'leaked' security detail trigger row

Modi to visit Kerala for two days from tomorrow; widely circulated 49-page correspondence appears to list his itinerary in minute detail

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Narendra Modi

A handwritten letter threatening to harm Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his arrival in Kerala for a two-day visit on April 24 and the alleged leak of the purported State police security scheme for the VVIP's protection have triggered a political row in the State.

The State police are yet to testify to the 'compromised' security scheme's authenticity. Nevertheless, the 49-page correspondence circulated widely in the media and online platforms appears to list Mr. Modi's itinerary and timings in granular detail and specify the responsibilities assigned to individual officers tasked with his protection.

'CM should explain'

Union Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan said on Saturday that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should explain how the Prime Minister's 'classified security arrangement scheme' leaked. He alleged that the State police had taken the death threat against Mr. Modi lightly.

BJP State president K. Surendran said the Elathur train arson incident, which had shades of a terrorist attack and claimed three lives, emphasised the peril to national security posed by radicals 'operating with impunity' in Kerala.

A senior official said the State police are verifying the letter's provenance and the author's motive. Investigators infer that a person in Kochi had possibly written the letter impersonating a neighbour with whom he had an axe to grind over some personal dispute.

'Sender' interviewed

He said plainclothes officers visited the residence of the 'sender' and interviewed him. The police have sent the letter for forensic graphological examination to check its veracity and identify the 'real' author.

The Bharatiya Janata Party's State committee office in Thiruvananthapuram received the letter last week.

Unusually, the threatening correspondence carried the name, mobile phone number and signature of the purported sender, a retired college employee.

The letter's existence emerged in the media after the purportedly 'classified police document' detailing Mr. Modi's security arrangements found its way, somewhat intriguingly, into the public domain.

'Security scheme'

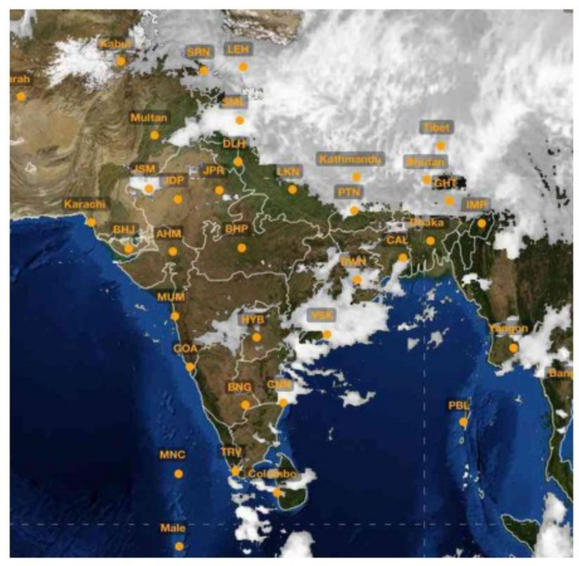
The 'security scheme' catalogued the possible threats to the Prime Minister. The paper noted that the recently proscribed Popular Front of India (PFI) had a significant cadre presence in Kerala. It flagged reports that the Islamic State and Jabhat Nusra were casting about for impressionable Kerala youth to radicalise them for their terrorist ends.

The threat perception document underscored the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) recent arrest of radical elements from Kannur.

The document also factored in the Left's campaign against the BJP's Modi-centred propaganda blitz and flagged the possibility of black flag protests.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana and south interior Karnataka

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.2	19.8	Kozhikode	—	37.0	27.6
Ahmedabad	—	39.3	26.3	Kurnool	2	39.4	23.8
Aizawl	24	30.8	15.4	Lucknow	—	37.0	22.4
Allahabad	—	39.1	22.0	Madurai	—	40.2	27.1
Bengaluru	7	34.8	22.3	Mangaluru	—	35.0	25.6
Bhopal	—	—	—	Mumbai	—	31.9	25.6
Bhubaneswar	—	37.8	22.7	Mysuru	—	36.2	22.6
Chandigarh	1	33.8	18.0	New Delhi	—	36.8	20.6
Chennai	—	36.7	28.2	Patna	4	37.6	21.8
Coimbatore	—	37.3	25.5	Port Blair	—	33.8	27.1
Dehradun	0.1	31.6	16.5	Puducherry	—	35.8	28.4
Gangtok	8	21.6	11.7	Pune	—	36.4	20.6
Goa	—	34.0	23.0	Raipur	—	38.9	25.5
Guwahati	3	31.5	19.1	Ranchi	—	34.7	21.4
Hubballi	—	39.0	20.0	Shillong	—	26.5	14.4
Hyderabad	1	37.0	23.8	Shimla	0.3	20.0	8.1
Imphal	3	31.0	16.5	Srinagar	0.2	14.2	3.9
Jaipur	—	35.8	22.5	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.9	26.6
Kochi	—	35.2	27.0	Tiruchi	—	39.7	27.0
Kohima	—	27.6	18.0	Vijayawada	—	35.4	26.4
Kolkata	—	37.0	—	Visakhapatnam	—	34.1	28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.34	.51	.28	82	108	
Bengaluru	.21	.11	.55	75	89	
Chennai	.2	.51	102	67	62	
Delhi	.11	153	.39	60	125	
Hyderabad	.15	.13	.38	53	91	
Kolkata	.36	.15	.30	98	138	
Lucknow	.10	.51	.33	181	112	
Mumbai	.32	.22	.9	27	144	
Pune	.—	.27	.26	63	61	
Visakhapatnam	.18	.43	.37	122	126	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Charkhi Dadri, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 217 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Sivasagar, Assam recorded a healthy AQI score of 28

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Telangana road transport to appoint village bus officers

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Taking the State-run buses closer to the people to increase occupancy, the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) will appoint 2,000 village bus officers whose primary duty will be to make people use the RTC services.

The programme, to be effective from May 1, is aimed at engaging people and ensuring that they use the RTC services rather than private transport. The guidelines for the appointment of village bus officers were released by the TSRTC Managing Director V.C. Sajjanar.

The primary responsibility of the officers will be to engage the local community and maintain a friendly relationship. They will collect information about bus schedules, services and other related issues every 15 days to understand the needs and improvement.

With people engaging the RTC services for functions, the officers will collect details of such events to make arrangements for additional services.

Similar officers will be appointed in the municipalities and in Hyderabad. The TSRTC plans to appoint over 2,000 officers who will be recognised for their work every three months with awards.

Prized harvest

Growing interest: A farmer driving away birds from his sorghum (jowar) field at Moinabad in Rangareddy district, on the outskirts of Hyderabad, on Saturday. With a tremendous change in food habits in favour of millets, farmers in Telangana have sown sorghum on over 1.27 lakh acres this Rabi season. The UN has declared 2023 the International Year of Millets. NAGARA GOPAL

New party launched in Kerala with an eye on Christian votes

The Hindu Bureau
KOTTAYAM

With an eye on the Catholic vote bank of Central Travancore, a new political party called National Progressive Party (NPP) was launched in Kochi on Saturday.

Former National Minority Commission member V.V. Augustine has been named the party chairman and former Kerala Congress deputy chairman Johny Nelloor is the working chairman.

Addressing mediapersons in Kochi , Mr. Augustine said, "The NPP is an independent outfit and maintains no special interest or affiliation with any political parties, including the Congress, the CPI(M), and the BJP."

The party, however, will look to enter into electoral alliances upon gaining strength on its own.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Nelloor stated that more leaders and workers from other parties would join the NPP in the coming days. He stressed that the party had no affiliation with any political or communal organisations.

With support from a few Catholic clergy, the party is expected to work closely with the BJP in the long run, leveraging the key issues raised by the church in Kerala, such as 'love jihad' and 'narcotics jihad'.

55 antique idols seized from house

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

The Idol Wing CID (IWCID) has seized 55 antique idols from an art collector's house at Raja Annamalaipuram in Chennai.

Displaying the seized artefacts to mediapersons on Saturday, Director General of Police (DGP) C. Sylendra Babu said: "The antique idols could be from the 9th Century or 10th Century CE. Our investigation disclosed that all the idols were stolen from temples, where they were worshipped. They are suspected to belong to Tamil Nadu or other States of south India, or other parts of the country. We are trying to identify the temples that these idols belong to. Investigation is on to ascertain whether these idols are related to cases that are already under investigation in the State." Additional Director-General of Police, Idol Wing CID, Shailesh Kumar Yadav was present. On receiving information about some persons packing antique stone idols, Mr. Yadav formed a special team. It rushed to the house and seized the idols.

The idols that were seized by the Idol Wing CID. DGP C. Sylendra Babu and Additional Director General of Police, Idol Wing CID, Shailesh Kumar Yadav, right, are seen. M. VEDHAN

"This is one of the biggest seizures this year. All 55 antique stone idols were lying in bushes and plants of the garden of the house belonging to Shoba Durairajan, an art collector living in the U.S. She allegedly purchased the idols from a notorious smuggler, Deenadayalan (Deceased) of Aparna Art Gallery, Murrays Gate Road, Alwarpet, in 2008 and 2015. Though she produced some handwritten letters as receipts that were given by the Deenadayalan, she failed to produce relevant documents to claim legal ownership. She would be subjected to interrogation in due course," Mr. Yadav said.

The IWCID had already seized 10 idols last January and nine more in December last year.

Woman arrested for nephew's murder sent to judicial custody

Mitosh Joseph
KOZHIKODE

A 34-year-old woman who was arrested on Friday on the charge of killing her 12-year-old nephew by giving him ice cream laced with poison, has been remanded in judicial custody for 14 days.

Thahira, the accused hailing from Arikkulam in Kozhikode district, was arrested on the basis of the victim's autopsy report that confirmed the consumption of rat poison.

It was reportedly the rivalry between the two families staying within a 500-metre distance that led to the alleged killing. The prime target of the suspect was the mother of the 12-year-old boy who was then away from home. Sources said there were some serious differences of opinion between Thahira and her sister-in-law that the family members were very much aware of.

Deputy Superintendent of Police P.R. Hariprasad, who led the investigation, said the woman was not suffering from any mental illness as propagated.

It was on April 16 that Ahamed Hassan Rifai, a Class VI boy from Arikkulam, was hospitalised with symptoms of suspected food poisoning. He died the following day. Officials of the Health and Food Safety Departments who carried out scientific inspections at the shop had found nothing unhealthy in the ice cream samples that they collected. Though the shop was temporarily shut following the incident, the police were suspicious.

Police sources said the suspect admitted to the crime when she was questioned on the basis of the autopsy report. A detailed investigation by the police found that the woman had reportedly mixed rat poison in the ice cream before giving it to the boy. A portion of the unused raticide was also recovered while gathering evidence from the crime spot and the shop from where she purchased it.

Probe into 'attack' on Naidu's convoy sought

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

An advocate of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, Gudapati Lakshminarayana, on Saturday wrote a letter to Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, requesting him to order an inquiry into the alleged attack on former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's convoy.

The Telugu Desam Party national president's convoy was attacked at Yerragondapalem in Prakasam district on Friday.

During Mr. Naidu's visit, the police allegedly sided with the miscreants and anti-social elements who mingled with the YSRCP leaders and cadres. The consequence was the attack on Mr. Naidu's convoy. But for the timely action by the National Security Guards (NSG) personnel, Mr. Naidu would have been injured in the stone-pelting.

However, NSG commanding officer Santosh Kumar suffered a bleeding injury as he was hit by stones that were apparently aimed at the TDP national president.

The police gave prior information about Mr. Naidu's tour to the protesters and they did not stop the miscreants in spite of knowing their intention to foment trouble, it was alleged.

From Page One

Hakki Pikki: caught in Sudan's civil war

"We make herbal medicines from gathering forest produce," he added. It was this traditional knowledge that found a place in the post-pandemic world. Africa has its own indigenous medicine and these herbal healers from India found ready acceptance.

Business potential of Africa

Back in the forests around Mysuru, the men heard that there was a demand for non-western forms of healing in parts of Africa. "Elders who travelled abroad had told us about the business potential of Africa and we thought we could try our luck," he said, adding that they had oils for body and joint pain.

An informal tribal collective that produces Neelambari Adivasi Herbal Hair Oil participates in prominent tribal fairs in India and has seen interest from international travellers. They have been sending their representatives to sell hair oil in Africa.

"Apart from Sudan, our Hakki Pikki representatives have visited Gabon and Cameroon to promote our forest-based items," a person from the collective said, speaking from Pakshirajapura village, near Hunsur in Karnataka.

Once the world opened up, some families, severely hit by COVID-19, set off for the country in eastern Africa. They deny that they were sent to Sudan through a network of illegal immigration and say that they acquired Sudanese visas.

After reaching Sudan, they found a ready market. The Darfur conflict that left more than a million people displaced had wiped out basic amenities like hospitals. "Many parts of Sudan do not have hospitals and our herbal solutions became well known here in Al Fashir. It was a good opportunity to earn a few lakhs that we could never even imagine back home," Mr. Dass said.

Among most vulnerable tribes

Rukmini Rao, founder of Gramya Resource Center for Women in Hyderabad and who has worked extensively with the marginalised tribal communities of the Deccan, said the Hakki Pikki are one of the most vulnerable tribes of India. "Unlike the Banjaras who have managed to access some modern education, the Hakki Pikki have remained beyond the circle of education and public welfare. The erosion of their traditional life in the forest has pushed them to the bottom of the social pyramid of Indian tribes."

However, they do not feature on the list of India's particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs). They are like the Birhors of Jharkhand, as forests that sustained their lives have been taken over by 'development' or are simply dysfunctional, she pointed out.

For now, those members of the tribe stranded in Sudan have just one demand from the Government of India: "We have no food or water, and our homes here are being shot at. We urge the government to take us back or shift us to safety in neighbouring Chad or Ethiopia."

Plea turns political

Unfortunately, their plea has turned political. A social media message posted on April 18 by former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah drew attention to them, urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Home Minister Amit Shah to intervene. The message received a testy response from Mr. Jaishankar, who termed it "appalling", indicating that it was not advisable to reveal the location and identity of people caught in a conflict zone. In the ensuing war of words, a larger story about the fate of the Hakki Pikki was overshadowed, but only momentarily.

Convoy movement was cancelled in Poonch hours before attack: official

Attack took place in the district, just six to seven km from the LoC; official says the vehicle first came under fire, followed by an IED explosion; it is unclear what happened to the weapons of soldiers in truck; the BSF chief reviewed security situation

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Hours before an Army truck was ambushed by unidentified terrorists in Jammu's Poonch district on Thursday, resulting in the death of five soldiers, the Army had cancelled the movement of a convoy on the same route, a senior government official said.

A road opening party had reportedly sanitised the route that was withdrawn at 1.30 p.m. on April 20 after the visit of a VIP was cancelled, the official said. Around 3 p.m., the solitary vehicle, travelling from Basooni in Balakote sector towards Sangiote in Poonch's Surankote as part of a counter-insurgency patrol, was ambushed.

Another official said that the vehicle first came under fire, followed by an improvised explosive device blast. There was no clarity on the whereabouts of the weapons being carried by the soldiers in the truck.

Tributes being paid to the five soldiers, who were killed in a terrorist attack, during wreath laying ceremony in Poonch district. PTI

The official added that the location where the attack took place is about six to seven kilometres from the Line of Control (LoC) and is dominated by the Indian Army's Rashtriya Rifles (RR).

The Army had initially said that five soldiers lost their lives after an Army truck caught fire.

Security review

After the incident, S.L. Thaosen, the Director-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) who is also holding the additional charge of the Border Security Force (BSF), reviewed the prevailing security scenario. The BSF is deployed along the International Border in Jammu and along a part of the LoC. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is deployed in depth areas.

Mr. Thaosen reviewed the overall deployment of the BSF and also the domination plan for forward defence locations. A senior BSF official said that a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for movement of convoys and vehicles already exists, and instructions were given to plug any infiltration from across the border.

"After a series of incidents in Jammu region in the past two years, the threat perception has been high here. Forces have been asked to scrupulously follow SOPs," said the BSF official. The Border Security Force (BSF) Director-General held security related discussions with Dilbag Singh, D-G of the J&K Police, and other CRPF commanders based in the Rajouri and Poonch areas. He later visited the Army authorities in Rajouri.

Militancy in Jammu

Over the past three years, there have been continued attempts to revive militancy in the Jammu region. As reported by *The Hindu* on January 29, security agencies have foiled 92% of terror attacks uncovered in the Jammu division in this period. The twin terror attacks on January 1 and 2 at Dangri village in Rajouri district, where seven people, including two children, of the Hindu community were killed, is yet to be solved as the unidentified terrorists remain at large.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who visited Jammu on January 13 to review the security situation after the Dangri incident, said that within three months, "the security grid in every area of Jammu would be impenetrable by further strengthening it".

ED attaches more assets in scholarship scam case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached an immoveable property estimated at ₹5.62 crore in Haridwar district of Uttarakhand belonging to the Seth Bimal Prasad Jain Education Trust in an alleged Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe scholarship scam case, said the agency on Saturday.

The Trust runs Phonics Group of Institutions in Roorkee.

The ED is conducting investigations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of a first information report (FIR) registered by the Haridwar police. On Saturday, in a statement, it alleged that the Phonics Group of Institutions had fraudulently received huge amounts of scholarship in the name of SC/ST students from the Social Welfare Department (Haridwar) from 2011-12 to 2014-15.

Mentally ill woman jailed for killing her father freed

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has ordered the release of a woman who spent 12 years in prison for the murder of her father, on realising that she was mentally ill at the time of the event.

A Bench led by Justice B.R. Gavai modified her offence to "culpable homicide not amounting to murder" after concluding that she had no intention to kill her father. She had earlier been found guilty of murder. Justice Gavai said the act of the woman fell squarely within the ambit of Section 84 of the IPC. The provision mandates that nothing is an offence if done by a person of unsound mind.

The judgment showed that all the prosecution witnesses invariably have testified about the mental illness of the woman.

Talks on consensus against war in Ukraine, trade ties likely during Modi's visit to France

NEWS ANALYSIS

Suhasini Haidar
Dinakar Peri
PARIS/NEW DELHI

As planning gets under way for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to France in July, hopes are rising in Paris for a "big ticket" deal that would further strengthen relations between the two countries. While Mr. Modi's visit has not yet been publicly announced, *The Hindu* had reported that he has been invited by French President Emmanuel Macron to be the chief guest for the July 14 National Day parade.

Several agreements in fields such as trade, defence, climate change and energy are likely to be discussed during the visit. The two leaders – who will meet twice this year, including in September when Mr. Macron attends the G-20 summit in Delhi – are also expected to try and break the "logjam" in the deal for six nuclear power reactors for India's Jaitapur project, which is still stuck over pricing and liability issues.

French President Emmanuel Macron has invited PM Narendra Modi to be the chief guest for the July 14 National Day parade. AFP

In addition, officials said the two sides would continue to discuss "convergences" in their policies towards issues such as the war in Ukraine and Indo-Pacific strategy vis-à-vis China. Referring to criticism over Mr. Macron's recent visit to China and his assertion of "strategic autonomy" over being what he called a "vassal state" to the U.S., French diplomatic sources said that there had been "no change" in France's policy on Taiwan.

According to the sources, who spoke to *The Hindu* as part of a larger delegation of journalists from countries of the Indo-Pacific region invited to Paris, Mr. Macron's visit had succeeded in three objectives on Ukraine: to secure China's support for the Ukrainian people, to seek support for conflict resolution, and to explain the "strategic consequences of any military support to Russia in the war".

Dialogue with Russia

The diplomatic sources said that France also wants India to talk to Moscow and keep up the engagement as Europe seeks solutions to the Ukraine conflict. Rather than issuing "threats", they said they want India and China to join the United Nations "consensus against the war", when asked if India's refusal to shift away from its traditional partnership with Russia would cast a shadow on the visit.

However, the spotlight of Mr. Modi's visit will be on whether India will announce a deal to purchase French company Dassault Aviation's "Rafale M", which is in competition with U.S.-made Boeing F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet jets. Significantly, Mr. Modi is due to travel to the U.S. in June, and France in July. Responding to questions about a number of French defence news agency reports on the possible deal, sources in Paris told *The Hindu*, that "fingers were crossed", but that such big deals take "time". Recently, the Indian Navy has fast-tracked a process to procure 26 jets to operate off its aircraft carriers and both Boeing F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet and Dassault Aviation Rafale-M have been evaluated.

The sources said Mr. Modi's visit is expected, but has not yet been announced, given that scheduling details need to be worked out.

'Optimistic' space policy lays out plans to privatise sector

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Centre's updated Space Policy, cleared by the Union Cabinet on April 6 but made public on Thursday, has drawn measured optimism from India's budding private sector start-up space.

The Indian Space Policy-2023 creates four distinct, but related entities, that will facilitate greater private sector participation in activities that have usually been the traditional domain of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

"To augment space capabilities; enable, encourage and develop a flourishing commercial presence in space; use space as a driver of technology development and derived benefits in allied areas; pursue international relations, and create an ecosystem for effective implementation of space applications among all stakeholders," the policy says.

IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) will be a "single window" clearance and authorisation agency for space launches, establishing launch pads, buying and selling satellites, and disseminating high-resolution data among other things.

It will also develop space industry standards, promote identified space activities and work with academia to widen the space ecosystem and enable industry-academia linkages. ISRO will focus on research into outer space. This will mean developing new space technologies and applications "...to maintain India's edge" in space infrastructure, space transportation, applications, capacity building and human spaceflight.

It will also share technologies, products, processes and best practices with NGEs (non-government entities and this will include private companies) and government companies. The policy underlines that ISRO will "...transition out from the existing practice of being present in the manufacturing of operational space systems. Hereafter, mature systems shall be transferred to industries for commercial exploitation."

Narendra Modi receives a memento from IN-SPACe chief Pawan Goenka (right) during the inauguration of the centre in 2022. PTI

A third entity, New Space India Limited (NSIL), that has already executed a few commercial space launches – and the replacement for ISRO's beleaguered Antrix – will be responsible for commercialising space technologies and platforms created through public expenditure, as well as, manufacture, lease, or procure space components, technologies, platforms and other assets from private or public sector.

Finally, the Department of Space will provide overall policy guidelines and be the "nodal" department for implementing space technologies and, co-ordinate international cooperation and coordination in the area of global space governance and programmes in consultation with Ministry of External Affairs. It will also create "an appropriate mechanism" to resolve disputes arising out of space activity.

While private sector participation has been highlighted as one of the main draws of the new policy, they will be limited to Indian companies and the question of whether foreign direct investment via the "automatic" route will be permitted in space is as yet unresolved and pending government approval.

Role demarcation

Experts told *The Hindu* that overall, the clear demarcation of roles among various entities, meant sowing the seeds for a burgeoning private sector space industry. Much as India's telecom sector is now dominated by private companies unlike a few decades ago, similarly the space sector too was envisioned to follow a similar trajectory and the policy acts as an enabler, said Arup Dasgupta, a former scientist at the ISRO and an observer of the space sector. "The clarity has been brought that Department of Space won't be everything and that whatever will be done will be relevant to, for instance, the Ministry of Commerce, Finance etc., is significant. IN-SPACe will play the role of growing a private sector," Dr. Dasgupta added.

Narayan Prasad, Chief Operations Officer, Satsearch said that while the long-awaited policy was an important "first step" in the commercial space ecosystem, there were several others needed. These included directions on the new entities actively demanding goods and services from private start-ups, and clarity on whether IN-SPACe would take on regulatory roles.

"One aspect that's revolutionary, according to me, is the enabling of open data access from ISRO's remote sensing satellites... Also, we have clarity on IN-SPACe's role as a guardian and promoter of the private space industry rather than gatekeeper," said Sreeram Ananthasayanam, partner, Deloitte India.

In enabling open satellite data access, satellite images with a ground sample distance (GSD) greater than five metres (a satellite image where two adjacent pixels represent points five metres apart on the ground) would be freely available, the new policy states. However those with a GSD less than 30 cm required IN-SPACe authorisation due to "national security considerations," the policy noted. "We have Google images freely available that are 25 cm," said Dr. Dasgupta.

Figures fail to reflect 2Mbps as minimum broadband speed

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Broadband statistics in India appear not to be reflecting the change in the definition of the service.

In January, the definition of broadband was updated to 2Mbps, quadrupling the bandwidth necessary to qualify for the tag. In India, "broadband" is defined not just as fixed line connections but also wireless connections that offer fast internet speeds.

As *The Hindu* had reported in February, the redefinition of broadband was significant in light of "grey spots" in the country, which are rural areas or crowded towns where mobile operators haven't built enough infrastructure to serve the demand of the local population without running into issues like congestion, with users reporting download speeds lower than the newly mandated 2Mbps.

However, the Telecom Subscription Report, published at the end of each month retrospectively, doesn't appear to be reflecting the changed definition of broadband at all. The report for January 31, published at the end of March, counts 806.07 million wireless broadband users, supposedly indicating that these subscribers have access to at least 2Mbps in bandwidth.

In the report for the previous month, before the redefinition, the number was 799.82 million, meaning the number of broadband users has actually increased in the wake of the change in definition.

TRAI and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) did not respond to a questionnaire.

The COAI, representing Vodafone Idea, Jio and Airtel, said in 2018 on re-definition this should be done on the basis of "average" download speed, and not be set as an absolute minimum in all circumstances.

Akali Dal patriarch Parkash Singh Badal in ICU

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch and former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal is in the intensive care unit (ICU) and is being "closely monitored", according to a medical bulletin on Saturday.

Mr. Badal, 95, a five-time Chief Minister, was admitted to the Fortis Hospital in Mohali a week ago after he complained of uneasiness in breathing. In a bulletin on Saturday, the hospital said, "In view of the criticality of Parkash Singh Badal's health, he continues to be closely monitored in the ICU."

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Home Minister Amit Shah enquired about his health.

"Spoke to Shri Sukhbir Badal [Mr. Badal's son] and enquired about the health of former Chief Minister of Punjab, Shri Prakash Singh Badal ji. Praying for his good health and speedy recovery," the Defence Minister said in a tweet.

In January 2022, Mr. Badal was admitted to a hospital in Ludhiana after testing positive for COVID-19. He was again hospitalised in June following complaints related to gastritis and bronchial asthma.

Amid rift, Raut says Ajit Pawar is capable of becoming the CM

The statement comes days after the duo were engaged in a verbal tussle; the NCP leader had expressed desire to become CM in an interview

Press Trust of India
JALGAON

Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut on Saturday said Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Ajit Pawar was capable of becoming Maharashtra Chief Minister with his vast administrative experience.

The statement comes days after the two engaged in a verbal tussle.

Mr. Raut, a key aide of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, also said some undeserving people had gone on to become Chief Minister of the State by engineering splits, in an apparent reference to Eknath Shinde whose rebellion along with 40 MLAs in June last year brought down the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

"Who would not like to be Chief Minister? And Mr. Ajit Pawar is capable of becoming Chief Minister. He has been in politics for so many years now and has been a Minister several times. He holds a record for having served as Deputy CM for the most number of times. Everyone thinks one should become CM," Mr. Raut told presspersons.

> Who would not like to be Chief Minister? He [Ajit Pawar] has been in politics for so many years now and has been a Minister several times
>
> **SANJAY RAUT**
> Shiv Sena (UBT) leader

Mr. Raut's statement comes a day after Mr. Ajit Pawar, during an interview with a media house in Pune, responded to a query on his chief ministerial ambitions by saying, "Yes, I would 100% like to be [Chief Minister]."

Next political move

Queried on this, Mr. Raut said, "He [Mr. Ajit Pawar] is not expressing this desire for the first time. So my best wishes to him."

These statements come amid speculation about Mr. Ajit Pawar's next political move, as the mercurial NCP leader cancelled some of his programmes recently, went incommunicado briefly and skipped the party's one-day convention in Mumbai on Friday.

While there is speculation about his move to the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mr. Ajit Pawar has said he will be with the NCP till he is alive, and Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule also recently stated the former was not in touch with the saffron party.

Mr. Ajit Pawar and Mr. Raut had a verbal tussle recently after the latter's weekly column in Shiv Sena (UBT) mouthpiece *Saamana* discussed a meeting between NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Mr. Thackeray.

On Id, Mamata urges Muslims to unite for 2024 polls

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

She cautioned that there were attempts to reintroduce the National Register of Citizens (NRC)

Participating in the prayers on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday urged the Muslim community to unite and vote in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The Trinamool Congress chairperson also cautioned them that there were attempts to reintroduce the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and said the "Constitution is being changed".

"All people, wherever they are, should come and vote in the 2024 election and make our government. If there is no democracy, everything will be lost," Ms. Banerjee said, participating in the prayers on Red Road in Kolkata.

While Ms. Banerjee has been participating in the Id prayers at the venue every year, her message usually used to be of maintaining peace across the State.

Without making a direct reference to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Chief Minister said she had to fight some "*gaddar*" parties. "I am ready to fight *gaddars* [traitors], I am ready to fight the money power [of the political opponents] and [Central] agencies. I have the courage to fight and will not bow my head," Ms. Banerjee said. She was accompanied by her nephew and Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee. Later in the day, Ms. Banerjee visited a number of mosques and greeted the people there.

No NRC in Bengal

"They also want to bring the NRC. I do not know where the NRC will be implemented, but it will not be implemented in West Bengal for sure,"she said.

"Some people are trying to divide the country and practise the politics of hate... I am ready to give my life, but will not allow any division of the country," she added.

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party targeted the political messaging of the Chief Minister during the prayers, with State BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya calling her speech "a classic example of divisive politics".

INBRIEF

Satyapal, Khap leaders protest after police stop their meet

Former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satyapal Malik, who has been called by the CBI over an alleged insurance 'scam', and some Khap leaders held a protest at a police station here on Saturday after he was allegedly stopped from holding a meeting at a south Delhi park. Rejecting reports that Mr. Malik had been detained, the police said the group did not have the requisite permission to hold the meeting at the MCD Park in R.K. Puram. Mr. Malik said he and his supporters had gone to the R.K. Puram police station to protest as he was stopped from giving food to Khap leaders at the park. PTI

CBI 'summons' to Satyapal a vengeful move, says Congress

The Congress targeted the Centre on Saturday over the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) "summons" to former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satyapal Malik, saying it is intended to send out a message to him and all those speaking the truth to remain silent. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said that though the CBI action was not surprising, what had come as a surprise was that the "vengeful" act came 10 days after he raised relevant and pertinent questions related to national security. We don't know why it took 10 days for the Prime Minister. Normally he is very prompt in silencing his critics," he said. PTI

Caste census is needed to ensure development, end discrimination: Akhilesh

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Reiterating the demand for a caste-based census, Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday said Ram Rajya and *Samajwad* (Socialism) would be possible only when a caste census is conducted.

He added that it is necessary to know the actual population of depressed sections within society to frame policies and end discrimination to make democracy strong.

Ram Rajya, socialism is possible only when the caste census is done, Mr. Yadav said. Only after the caste census, there will be development of everyone, there will be brotherhood, discrimination will end and democracy will become strong, he added.

Akhilesh Yadav

The SP president has on multiple occasions called for a caste census in the State. When such a census is being conducted in neighbouring Bihar, why can't it be held in Uttar Pradesh, he asked.

"We want caste census. Without knowing the actual count of various caste groups, their development is incomplete. For designing policies, we need to know the population of social groups, how will you win everyone's trust without it? *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas* (with everyone's support, everyone's development) is not possible without caste census," he had said in the Budget Session of the State Assembly.

The SP has also promised to conduct caste census within three months if voted to power.

Recently, the Backward Classes Cell of the party organised a caste census seminar across the State arguing that without knowing the actual counting of caste-wise population, the development of deprived and exploited classes is not possible.

Rahul vacates official house, says he is paying the price for speaking truth

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi vacated his official bungalow in Delhi and shifted to the residence of his mother and party leader Sonia Gandhi on Saturday.

Mr. Gandhi, who was disqualified from the Lok Sabha last month following his conviction in a defamation case, was asked to vacate the 12 Tughlaq Lane bungalow by April 22.

"I have paid the price for speaking the truth, I am ready to pay any price," he said, adding that he would continue to raise issues of price rise and corruption with double the force.

On Saturday, Mr. Gandhi, Ms. Sonia Gandhi and his sister and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited the bungalow in the morning and handed over keys of the vacated house to officials of the Central Public Works Department. He also shook hands with CPWD officials and thanked them.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi handing over the keys of the 12 Tughlaq Lane bungalow in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Talking to presspersons while leaving the bungalow, he said, "I have no problem even if it has been snatched away from me. This house was given to me by the people of India. I will stay with the former Congress president [Sonia Gandhi] at 10 Janpath for some time and then find some other way."

Ms. Vadra said her brother was courageous and "not scared of anyone and he will continue his struggle". All this is happening because he spoke the truth about this government, the Congress leader said.

The Congress said the government may "evict" Mr. Gandhi from a house but he occupies a place in the hearts and homes of crores of Indians. The party also launched a "*MeraGharAapkaGhar*" campaign on social media with party leaders offering their homes to Mr. Gandhi.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said Mr. Gandhi is neither worried about the post nor about the government house. "He did not compromise on his principles even after risking everything," he said.

He also took a swipe at former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who continues to be at his official residence allotted to him as the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, saying Mr. Gandhi is not a "Ghulam".

Assam youth wing chief expelled from Congress for six years

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Assam Youth Congress president Angkita Dutta was expelled from the primary membership of the Congress for six years on Saturday for anti-party activities.

Ms. Dutta had accused Youth Congress chief B.V. Srinivas of causing her mental agony after she levelled sexual harassment charges against former Youth Congress president Keshav Kumar.

"Congress president has expelled Dr. Angkita Dutta, president, Assam Pradesh Youth Congress, from the primary membership of the party, for six years for her anti-party activities with immediate effect," Tariq Anwar, member-secretary of the disciplinary action committee of the Congress, said in an order.

The Bharatiya Janata Party slammed the Congress over the move, saying its model of women empowerment and its slogan of "*ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon*" (I am a woman and I can fight) are hollow.

The BJP's IT cell head, Amit Malviya, said in a tweet: "This is Congress's model of women empowerment!" "Sack the woman who alleged harassment instead of providing a platform to hear her grievances. The manner in which Angkita Dutta has been removed from the Congress is uninspiring for women," he said.

To cut at root of narcotics, Centre plans drive against poppy, cannabis

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

As the Union government intensifies its crackdown against drugs, cultivation of poppy and cannabis in area the size of over 89,000 football fields has been destroyed in the past three years.

Aiming to make India "drug-free" by 2047, the Union Home Ministry plans to link recovery and usage of narcotics and banned substances in a particular area to the annual appraisal report of a District Superintendent of Police. This will bring accountability and fix responsibility, a senior government official said.

According to the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), in the past three years, 35,592 acres of poppy cultivation and 82,691 acres of cannabis has been destroyed across the country. The States where the crops were destroyed are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tripura and Telangana.

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh told *The Hindu* that from March 20, 2022, to April 20 this year, 4305.1 acres of poppy cultivation in the State has been destroyed. In relation to this, as many as 110 cases have been registered and 40 persons arrested. Manipur has seen the highest-ever destruction of such crops in the past three years.

Mr. Singh said the State has launched an alternative livelihood scheme for farmers growing poppy illegally, and also provides cash incentives to destroy the illegal crops.

"Farmers in Peh village of Ukhrul district were given a cash reward of ₹10 lakh for voluntarily destroying cultivated poppy.

Stringent action: Jharkhand Police personnel destroying illegal poppy cultivation in Khunti district. FILE PHOTO

Winter hybrid vegetable seeds and saplings of pineapple, apple and spices, including ginger and turmeric, were distributed to farmers. The scheme covered 600 farmers," Mr. Singh said.

Use of drones

The Ministry has constituted a study group to analyse the use of drones in the destruction of illegal crops in remote areas, and the NCB also shares satellite images with the affected States.

The NCB arrested 2,412 persons in the last three years, out of which 224 are foreigners.

The Ministry is encouraging the liberal application of the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITNDPS) Act, 1988, which includes a provision to detain an individual for up to two years without a court's intervention.

"Earlier, the PITNDPS Act was not being used much. We have made the States aware that the provision needs to be used more often. As of now, more than 500 persons are detained across the country under the particular Section," the official said. The orders can be passed by the Central government or a State government, or any officer of the Central government not below the rank of Joint Secretary.

The NCB said the use of the 'dark net' and crypto currency in illegal drugs is increasing, and in 2020, 2021 and 2022, the agency investigated 59 such cases. A sub-group on the counter-terrorism portal, the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), has been created to share inputs on the use of the dark net and crypto currency for trade in narcotics.

Following the directives by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, all States have created dedicated Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTF). The first ever conference of State ANTFs was held on April 19-20. At the conference, Mr. Shah stressed the need to confiscate the property and assets of the accused for maximum deterrence.

Property frozen

Data shows that in 2022, the NCB conducted financial investigation into 33 such cases in which property worth ₹17 crore was frozen.

At the conference, the Minister said that unless seized drugs were destroyed through proper process, there will be chances of rotation of drugs due to corruption, adding that the destruction should be held in public. So far, 6.7 lakh kg of drugs have been burnt by government agencies.

Each recovery, seizure and arrest is plotted on an interactive map and placed on a centralised portal run by the NCB, the Central anti-narcotics agency.

On the National Narcotics Coordination portal, the source and destination of drugs are highlighted too, and information up to the district levels is maintained. Another database, called NIDAAN, has the photographs, fingerprints, court orders, information and details of all suspects and convicts arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act so far, which can be accessed by State and Central law enforcement agencies.

Officials have been asked to study court judgments that have led to acquittal of the accused and take remedial steps to enhance the conviction rate. Special training is being given to public prosecutors to handle such cases.

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INBRIEF

India conducts successful trial of BMD interceptor missile

India has successfully conducted the maiden flight trial of a sea-based endo-atmospheric interceptor missile off the coast of Odisha. The missile test was conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Navy on Friday. "The purpose of the trial was to engage and neutralise a hostile ballistic missile threat, thereby elevating India into the elite club of nations having Naval BMD capability," the Ministry of Defence said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO, the Navy and the industry involved in the successful demonstration of ship-based ballistic missile defence capabilities. PTI

BJP calls Digvijaya a 'blot' on India, after his dig at Scindia

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh's dig at his former party colleague Jyotiraditya Scindia has triggered a war of words, with leaders from the ruling BJP calling the Rajya Sabha member a "blot" on the country and wishing that he is born in Pakistan in his next life. On Friday, Mr. Singh during his visit to the Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, responded to a query about what he would seek from the deity, saying, "Hey Mahakal, a second Jyotiraditya Scindia should not be born in the Congress." Later, Mr. Scindia tweeted that Lord Mahakal should ensure an "anti-national" like Mr. Singh is not born in India. PTI

Murugan visits village along the India-Myanmar border

Union Minister L. Murugan on Saturday became the first Central Minister to visit Avangkhu, a village along the India-Myanmar border in Phek district of Nagaland, and announced projects to strengthen infrastructure there. Speaking at a public interaction programme held at the International Trade Centre in Avangkhu, Mr. Murugan, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, recalled the Centre's commitment towards developing the northeast, including the border areas. He announced that work for the already-sanctioned two-lane road up to the Avangkhu border will start soon and this will pave the way for the development of border regions, an official release said. PTI

Indian climber's condition improving, but still critical

Indian climber Anurag Maloo has shown signs of improvement, but is still in critical condition, his brother said on Saturday, days after he was found alive by rescuers on Mount Annapurna in Nepal. Mr. Maloo, 34, a resident of Kishangarh in Rajasthan, went missing on Monday after he fell from around 6,000 metres while descending from Camp III of the world's tenth highest peak. A team of rescuers located the Indian climber in a deep crevasse between Camp III and Camp II of the peak, said Thaneshwor Guragain, information officer at Seven Summit Treks – the organiser of the expedition. PTI

SUDOKU

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Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	8	6	9	1	7	4	3	2
2	4	7	6	3	8	5	1	9
9	1	3	5	2	4	7	6	8
4	6	2	7	8	3	9	5	1
8	3	1	4	9	5	6	2	7
7	9	5	1	6	2	3	8	4
6	5	9	8	7	1	2	4	3
3	7	8	2	4	6	1	9	5
1	2	4	3	5	9	8	7	6

Vacant posts and poor supply of drugs hampering CGHS dispensaries: report

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare asks the Centre to ensure adequate doctor-to-population ratio in dispensaries providing healthcare for Union govt. employees, pensioners; calls for clearing pending bills for smooth flow of funds, ensure supply of medicines

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Amid a growing load of new COVID-19 cases in India, the report card of the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), which provides comprehensive healthcare to over 34 lakh employees and pensioners, does not read well.

While the Health Ministry recently announced revised package rates for all CGHS beneficiaries, the scheme continues to be plagued by unavailability of medicines in dispensaries, inability to fully utilise allotted funds, vacant posts across the country (medical officers and non-gazetted staff), delay in clearance of dues to private hospitals and poor experience of beneficiaries.

This was highlighted in the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare report tabled in the Rajya Sabha.

Plagued by shortage: The committee has recommended that the Ministry expedite the recruitment of 340 candidates selected through the Combined Medical Examination for filling vacancies. RAMAKRISHNA G.

The report says approximately 22% of the posts of allopathic medical officers and 39% of non-gazetted staff are vacant.

Major hindrance

"The committee feels that the shortage of doctors is a major problem that pervades the Indian healthcare system. Under CGHS, the government has also been employing retired doctors for filling the vacancies in CGHS dispensary," it notes while adding that the doctor-to-population ratio still remains skewed in many cities that are covered under the CGHS.

The committee, accordingly, has recommended the Ministry to assess the requirement of doctors in CGHS dispensaries across the country and ensure that an adequate doctor-to-population ratio is maintained.

The committee has further recommended the Ministry to expedite the recruitment of 340 candidates selected through the Combined Medical Examination for filling vacancies including those under the CGHS.

Funds underutilised

Pointing to the underutilisation of funds, the committee said that in the financial year 2022-23, under revenue head, approximately 73% of the funds has been utilised vis-à-vis revised estimates for 2022-23.

However, under the capital head, the actual expenditure is just 11% of the revised estimates.

Pending payments under the revenue head have been cited as the reason for underutilisation of funds, and expenses amounting to ₹24 crore is yet to be accounted for, under the capital head.

The committee, therefore, has recommended the Ministry to ensure smooth and timely flow of funds and settle the bills at the earliest.

However, under the scheme, even after considering all the cited expenses under the revenue and capital head, funds still remain unutilised.

The committee said that such an important employees' welfare scheme that is tasked with providing healthcare services must exhibit maximum utilisation of funds. It recommended the Ministry to continue to make efforts for maximum utilisation of the allotted funds under the scheme.

'Ensure supply'

"Issues of basic medicines being indented in some CGHS dispensaries have also been noted," it said.

The committee also recommended the Ministry to ensure consistent supply of medicines through schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).

Reviving a 'dead' river: a cultural event to celebrate legacy of Yamuna

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Yamuna, a river that environmentalists consider ecologically dead in Delhi, will now be the focus of a cultural push to renew India's civilisational and socio-religious connect with its waterbodies.

Come September, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) will host a cultural programme on the banks of the river in Delhi, under its special project – Riverine Cultures of India – that began in 2018.

The highlight of the event will be a short festival of films on waterbodies, shot by children from across the country.

The programmes will include a photo exhibition comparing the Yamuna of today with what the river was like 50 years ago; symposia on various aspects such as ecology and conservation of India's rivers and their importance in the country's heritage; and an exhibition themed on 15 ghats across the country in *Sanjhi* or paper stencil art.

The larger project is focusing on six rivers right now: Ganga, Yamuna, and Sindhu in the north; and Krishna, Godavari, and Cauvery in the south. Dates of similar events on the other rivers are not known.

On edge: The Central Pollution Control Board declared the river 'almost dead' in 2015. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

IGNCA has been tasked with conducting the festival as a pilot for a bigger project

The project envisages festivals celebrating rivers in different cities, a study on these rivers in their contemporary context, and workshops along the banks involving environmentalists, cultural historians, anthropologists and folklorists. They hope to develop a major study on riverine cultures, along with one on the mythical river Saraswati to "understand its importance in the evolution of human cultures".

As of now, festivals have been organised on the banks of the Ganga in Munger (Bihar), Godavari in Nashik (Maharashtra), Krishna in Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh), and Hooghly in Kolkata (West Bengal).

An effort to reconnect

Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA, said, "We in Indian culture look at rivers very differently. We have an emotional bond with them. In many places rivers are worshipped; there is a regular connect with society. A river influences the socio-cultural life of the entire region, whether it is cropping pattern, festivals, or religious rituals." He also feels that India is "losing that connect very fast" and this project is an effort to reconnect with rivers.

Sources in the Ministry of Culture said that the government has tasked the IGNCA to conduct the cultural festival as a pilot for a bigger project on the Yamuna.

The Yamuna's confluence with the Ganga and the mythical Saraswati at Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj is one of the country's most important pilgrimage spots for Hindus.

However, the river had been declared "almost dead" by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2015 citing untreated waste flowing into it from several cities along its banks.

The definition of a river is that it must have life, which is measured by its capacity to dissolve oxygen. The dissolved oxygen content in the Yamuna as it passes through Delhi is zero.

Environmentalists feel that before recreating a cultural connect, the government needs to take measures to bring the river back to life. "The Yamuna in Delhi is in such a state that letting children do anything on its banks might harm their health," says Vikrant Tongad, founder, Social Action for Forest and Environment (SAFE), who has worked extensively towards the conservation of the river. He added that the government needs to think of protecting the river's flood plains before planning any kind of major event there.

Holy dip: People gather to take a bath in the Ganga during the Ganga Pushkaralu Kumbh in Varanasi on Saturday. PTI

Pushkaralu festival returns to the Ganga after a gap of 12 years

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

The U.P. government is expecting more than one lakh pilgrims to visit the city for the event

The 12-day Pushkaralu festival celebrated by Telugus started in Varanasi on Saturday with the Uttar Pradesh government expecting more than one lakh pligrims to visit the city as part of the event till May 3.

The festival, during which pilgrims worship the Ganga and their ancestors, is being organised in Varanasi after a gap of 12 years.

It is the second event, after the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam, being organised in Varanasi which will witness a large number of South Indians visiting the city.

Many groups of pilgrims arrived on Saturday with special trains scheduled for the festival.

The Varanasi district administration has made arrangements for crowd regulation as well as for facilitating visitors in completing their rituals at the ghats along the Ganga and for offering prayers at the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

"We have done all the necessary arrangements such as drinking water supply, toilets and changing rooms and deployed rescue teams, including divers, a medical team and the police, for crowd regulation. Dedicated teams of sanitary staff will take care of cleanliness works at the ghats between Assi and Dashashwamedh," said S. Rajalingam, the District Magistrate of Varanasi.

Buoyant history afloat on a neglected boat in Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
HOWRAH/KOLKATA

On the banks of the Rupnarayan river, overlooking Tamluk (the ancient port town of Tamralipta), a boat has remained tied to a peg for the past six months. The 37-foot-long, 9.5-foot-wide V-shaped wooden structure stands apart from other boats at the Dihimandal Ghat of the Howrah Shyampur block. The wooden structure, which lies unused in a nondescript village in West Bengal, had inspired an international project – "The Chhotbuilders of West Bengal project: documenting the vanishing craft knowledge of a unique boat-building tradition".

Under the collaborative project between the University of Exeter, United Kingdom and the Central University of Haryana, India, boat-makers near Dihimandal Ghat were commissioned to build the boat last year.

Panchanan Mondal, 72, a specialist boatmaker who built the *chhot,* said, "This *chhot* we built was after 30 years. There are no more *chhot* boats around. The knowledge of boat-making has been passed to us by our forefathers."

The word *chhot* in Bengali means 'to run'.

Mr. Mondal and his four sons – Amal, Manimohan, Dilip and Dipak – made the boat from different kinds of wood over several months as researchers and academics from the University of Exeter documented the entire process.

Panchanan Mondal with the *chhot* that he built, at Dihimondal Ghat in Howrah. DEBASISH BHADURI

The boat-making process was once a lifeline of the people living in the coastal areas of south Bengal who used the boats extensively for navigating the rivers and estuaries of the region.

However, after the boat was finished, the Mondal family was left alone with probably the last *chhot* ever built on the quiet banks of the Rupnarayan.

"I have told everyone that the boat needs to be preserved. But nothing has worked out. It pains me that the boat is left unattended and in the open. Soon, the structure will be damaged," the veteran boat-maker said.

No takers

Swarup Bhattacharya, a fellow of the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) and long-term researcher on wooden boats of West Bengal, pointed out that when the boat was being built, it was agreed that it will be kept at the upcoming Maritime Museum at Lothal, being developed by the Ministry of Shipping. Yet, even nearly six months after it has been ready, the boat has no takers.

Professor Vasanth Shinde, archaeologist, said that the Maritime Museum developed by the Ministry of Shipping in Lothal was "still a long way" off and for the time being, the boat can be preserved by the AnSI.

How to 'flood the ballot' to confuse voters

The Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), a local party with the single agenda of merging Kannada-speaking areas with Maharashtra, has been active since the first election of 1952. The party is not recognised, does not have a stable symbol and all its contestants are treated as Independents. Kannada organisations have accused the MES of fielding more than one official candidate in the polls, and appropriating any Marathi speaker who wins as the official MES candidate.

In 1985, Kannada organisations fielded 298 candidates apparently to confuse the voters, by flooding the ballot with Independent candidates. The ballot paper was so big that election officials held street corner meetings to show how it had to be folded three times to insert it inside the box.

The ballot paper during the Karnataka Assembly election in 1985. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Strike rates

The table shows the strike rates of turncoats, incumbents and repeaters fielded in the past three Karnataka Assembly elections. The strike rate is the number of seats won as a share of seats contested. The turncoats fielded by the BJP fared better in the 2018 election

Party	Year	Turncoats	Incumbents	Repeaters
BJP	2008	38	73	65
Cong.	2008	46	50	44
JD(S)	2008	18	38	28
BJP	2013	30	38	33
Cong.	2013	17	67	70
JD(S)	2013	27	42	35
BJP	2018	47	64	59
Cong.	2018	35	43	42
JD(S)	2018	14	48	38

Source: "Political Career Tracker for Candidates in Indian National and State Assembly Elections", Trivedi Centre for Political Data, Ashoka University

Switching sides: Jagadish Shettar who quit BJP to join Congress

A few women 'inherit' tickets this time around

"Dynasty politics" usually involves sons rather than daughters. This time, while Sowmya Reddy (Ramalinga Reddy's daughter) and Roopa Shashidhar (K.H. Muniyappa's daughter) have been MLAs and are again contesting, daughter of former Minister Motamma, Nayana Jhawar, is entering politics for the first time.

Prime Minister Modi has the time to call K.S. Eshwarappa, but not to help Hakki Pikki tribal people in Sudan

SIDDARAMAIAH
Leader of the Opposition

With hardline Hindutva, BJP hoped to blur caste identities, but that is no walk in the park

The Hindutva push was also a struggle by hardliners in the party to wrest control over the State unit; however, leaders from the other faction say the 'ideological project' is only a cover for individual ambitions of leaders to come to power

NEWS ANALYSIS

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

Top-level change: After B.S. Yediyurappa was eased out to appoint Basavaraj Bommai as Chief Minister, Karnataka went through a communally charged phase. ANI

The change of guard in Karnataka from B.S. Yediyurappa to Basavaraj Bommai in July 2021 marked a change in the tone of the ruling BJP and the government in the State. It kicked off an experiment to push "hardline Hindutva". Whether it will yield dividends for the BJP is to be seen in the election.

For instance, the government passed laws such as the Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2021 (better know as anti-conversion law), ostensibly to fight "love jihad", and the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act (KPSPCA), 2020, which banned cow slaughter with stringent clauses. The State also saw intense communal polarisation, especially in the first half of 2022, when an unprecedented campaign that started with banning hijab in classrooms in Udupi extended to calls for banning halal meat and *azaan* and even boycotting Muslim traders in temple fairs.

However, the communal campaign slowed down by June 2022. "There was a realisation within the party that it had gone too far and taking the narrative any further may backfire," a senior strategist for the party said. The demand for slowing down came from the party's coastal Karnataka leaders, a region considered to be a Hindutva laboratory, sources said. This is the region where the murder of a BJP worker, Praveen Nattaru, has come to haunt them as the workers are angry at the leaders for "doing little" for their safety. The PFI ban was an attempt to assuage this anger, sources said. However, the BJP has now fielded leaders like Yashpal Suvarna, a Hindutva hardliner who was the face of the hijab campaign and has been accused of cow vigilantism.

Though Karnataka is the first State in South India where the BJP came to power, party base here is different from northern States

Beyond its base

What is different about the Hindutva push this time around is that it went beyond the traditional ideological pockets of coastal Karnataka and Mumbai Karnataka (Kittur Karnataka) regions. The hijab protests spread even to Mandya, part of the Vokkaliga heartland. The Rama Navami celebrations in 2022 saw communal flare-ups in several parts of the Kalyana Karnataka region, besides Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts. The party has tried to revive the Idgah Maidan dispute in Bengaluru and promised a Ram Mandir, on the lines of the one being built in Ayodhya, in Ramanagara and is developing the Anjanadri temple, said to be the "birthplace of Hanuman", in Koppal. The party also tried to push a theory that two Vokkaliga chieftains, Uri Gowda and Nanje Gowda, killed 19th century ruler Tipu Sultan for his alleged atrocities on Hindus. However, this narrative had to be rolled back quickly as a section of the Vokkaligas perceived it as an attempt to brand the community as "traitors" who killed a man whom they regarded as a "hero".

While the party is making an aggressive pitch in the region, a senior party leader said it was unlikely they would break into Vokkaliga votes, at least this election season, given that KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar and Janata Dal(S) leader and former Chief Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy, both from the community, are fighting hard. "But we have hopes of making inroads into the community in the future. We have seen signs that the community is receptive to Hindutva," the leader said.

The Hindutva push is also a struggle by hardliners to wrest control over the State unit of the party and reduce its dependence on caste vote banks, and a mass leader like B.S. Yediyurappa. The former Chief Minister brought the party to power with the help of lateral entrants and engineered defections, snatching a share of the erstwhile Janata Party and Lingayat vote base. "We have made a lot of compromises to bring the party to power and now that we are in the *numero uno* position across the country, it is time to convert the party in the State into a more ideologically cohesive and committed unit. The high command's keenness on the project is evident in the change of guard in the State," a leader said. However, leaders from the other faction argue that the "ideological project" was only a cover for the individual ambition of leaders. "As long as the politics of the party in the State is dependent on mass politics and caste alliances, several of these hardline Hindutva leaders can never dream of becoming Chief Ministers," a senior leader from the party said.

The rebellion of Jagadish Shettar, Laxman Savadi and Ayanur Manjunath, who joined the Congress and the JD(S) on being denied tickets, and of Mr. Yediyurappa back in 2012 when he briefly floated his own party, significantly all Lingayats, shows that the community's relationship with the party does not negate caste loyalties.

Though Karnataka is the first State in South India where the BJP came to power, the party base is different from that of the northern States. The party banks on the caste base of Veerashaiva-Lingayats, Valmikis and the Scheduled Castes (Left). Will the BJP be able to subsume these identities in the larger Hindutva basket?

Amid quota cut, hijab ban, will Muslim vote be split among secular parties?

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

Atmosphere of fear: Muslim students protest against the ban on hijab in classrooms in Chikkamagaluru in March 2022. PTI

Constituting nearly 13% of Karnataka's 5.27-crore electorate, Muslims make up a significant voting bloc in over 30 urban constituencies. Informal estimates by political parties indicate that they could change the fortunes of candidates in nearly 70 constituencies, where the community accounts for at least 20% of the electorate.

This time around, due to unprecedented "oppression" by the ruling dispensation, the question is whether Muslims will vote for a single party or will their votes get split among "secular" parties, giving the Bharatiya Janata Party an advantage. Community leaders say it is difficult to prevent splitting of votes between the Congress and the Janata Dal(S), though minorities are wary of the latter for having been "opportunistic" in the past.

No party for Muslims

To counter the anti-incumbency factor, the BJP is leaving no stone unturned. The government increased reservation for the Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities to consolidate non-Muslim votes. It did this by scrapping the 4% sub-reservation for Muslims within the quota for Other Backward Classes (OBC), a move that is now being challenged in the Supreme Court. Several hot-button issues, including the ban on wearing hijabs in classrooms, have left the Muslim community in Karnataka frustrated. Community leaders say the political scenario is confusing. "Though the approach is to counter communal forces, there is no common strategy in place as yet," said one of them, who did not wish to be named. Despite several issues that have hit the community directly, no party has come out openly in support of Muslims in a consistent manner. This is because they do not want to be branded as "pro-minority" and "anti-Hindu."

Former IAS official Mohammed Sanaulla says that this time around, there is a strong "fear factor" within the Muslim community over the way they are being treated.

"This could influence their voting. While the hijab issue has affected a small percentage of the community, what is very disturbing is the scrapping of reservation for the community, which is illogical. Besides, the cut in funds for the Karnataka Minority Development Corporation has hit Muslim students hard. So, the natural choice will be the party that promises to restore these," he says.

But it is difficult to say if a single secular party will get an absolute majority, he says.

Candidates from parties such as the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) and the All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) may also end up splitting the Muslim vote in some constituencies.

The Karnataka Muslim Muttahida Mahaz (KMMM), an umbrella organisation of 28 non-political Muslim organisations, alleges that efforts were made to subtly divert Muslim voters from major issues such as unemployment, corruption, price rise or poor infrastructure, which are common across the State, by creating controversies around hijab or *azaan*, the Muslim call to prayer. In the current scene, it is important that all voters, not just Muslims, should choose wisely and select good governance, KMMM convener Masood Abdul Khader says.

Syed Tanveer Ahmed, director of the Holistic Education Board, a community trust that handholds minority educational institutions, said, "The hijab issue has created some kind of fear primarily among the middle and lower middle class and this is directly proportional to education."

However, the poor and downtrodden classes among Muslims are not bothered about these things, he says.

"They are more worried about price rise, unemployment and issues affecting their livelihood. And it is this section of society that is vulnerable to inducements and incitement," he argues.

A fight for dignity and justice

59-year-old Ramakka, a Jogathi dancer, has entered the poll fray to highlight discrimination in society against the third gender

Kumar Buradikatti
KALABURAGI

Ramakka T.

Ramakka T., a candidate of the Desh Prem Party who has filed her nomination papers for the Kampli Assembly constituency in Ballari district, is the only third gender candidate contesting in the Karnataka Assembly elections this time.

Ms. Ramakka, 59, a native of Badanahatti village in Kurugod taluk of Ballari district, told *The Hindu* that rampant gender discrimination prevailing in society, especially against the transgender community, had motivated her to enter the poll fray. Ms. Ramakka is a Jogathi and leads a team of 10 traditional Jogathi dancers. They participate in various private and government programmes. "We earn ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 per performance and split it between us," she said. "But work is not regular and we have no choice but to beg when there is no work." She added that she takes care of her 107-year-old mother in her native village. "We [transpersons] beg at traffic signals, shops, and on pavements for our survival. We are ready to work hard and earn a living. But nobody gives us work. Joblessness has forced us to resort to begging for survival. We don't get a house for rent, though we are ready to pay the rent. You cannot understand the sufferings of the transgender community. The plight of my community provoked me to enter the poll fray," Ms. Ramakka told *The Hindu*.

"I am aware that only those who have money and muscle power and strong support of the community can win elections. But still, I want to test my luck. My fight is for my community. There are a number of people other than transpersons who have extended support to me. I will take them along and go for my poll campaign," she said.

Reeling under price rise, voters enticed with competing promises from the Opposition

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

Ahead of the Assembly election, the Opposition Congress and the Janata Dal(S) have made a slew of poll promises to address price rise. The reality of price rise which affects the livelihood of individual families has triggered these promises, say the Opposition parties.

These have drawn angry reactions from the ruling BJP, which says the promises, if implemented, will "drain the exchequer."

Electoral promises

The table lists the poll promises announced by Congress and Janata Dal(S) targeting the concern over rise in prices

CONGRESS	JANATA DAL(S)
200 units of free power	50% subsidy for 10 LPG cylinders annually
Monthly incentive of ₹2,000 to homemakers	₹5,000 monthly pension to 65+
10 kg free rice a month	₹2,500 monthly pension to widows and specially abled
Hike in monthly unemployment allowance of ₹1,500 to ₹3,000	₹2,000 monthly incentive to auto drivers

A steep climb

In Karnataka, a price rise of 21.2% has been captured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) notified by the State government to calculate wages for industrial workers in the State between 2018 and 2022.

This has been calculated after capturing the price in the consumer basket comprising 160 to 170 food commodities, petroleum products and goods and services, predominantly consumed by industrial workers in 16 centres across the State.

However, those in the know believe that though industrial pockets recorded a 21.2 % increase, the actual rise in other centres where consumption pattern differs is far higher, and certain price fluctuations are not captured in the price rise. For example, the CPI does not capture the cost of computers or laptops which are very crucial for employment in the current day. Many goods such as refrigerators or two-wheelers are also excluded.

The rise in prices has been acutely felt by the poor as free gas cylinders under the Ujwala scheme and other subsidy programmes have been withdrawn, even as the price of a non-subsidised LPG cylinder touched ₹1,105 in Bengaluru – a 70% increase since 2018.

Similarly, the cost of diesel and petrol has also gone up by 33% and 37%, respectively, in five years. The agricultural and dairy farming sectors, which are very crucial for an agrarian economy like Karnataka, have also seen a rise by over 25%, reducing the disposable personal income of farmers, who have also been affected by the vagaries of nature.

Little relief for workers

Despite the rise in prices, the minimum wage revision exercise taken up by the State government, currently for those whose employment completed the five-year cycle since 2016, has not brought relief. The minimum wages have been increased by an average of 10% for 22 employments out of the total 83 scheduled employments in the State. A whopping 1.77 crore workers, or about 20% of the State's population, are eligible for minimum wages. Despite the addition of a marginal annual variable dearness allowance rise, the total fixed wage will not match the CPI captured 21.2% price rise.

Instead of announcing doles, the political parties could actually look at empowering workers with fair and minimum wages that is in line with the price rise, workers' unions argue. However, the issue of minimum wages did not even figure in the election manifestos of the mainstream political parties in 2018, they say.

The workers are now watching the moves of the political parties for the 2023 polls.

KATHMANDU

Need to do 'homework' before visiting India, says Nepal PM

REUTERS

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is making elaborate preparations ahead of his trip to India next month, saying he needs to do "homework" before embarking on the visit. While the official date of his visit is yet to be announced. Prachanda's trip to India could come in the first or the second week of May. PTI

SYDNEY

Barry Humphries, comedian and creator of 'Dame Edna', dies

AP

Australian comedian Barry Humphries, whose "Dame Edna Everage" alter ego left audiences in stitches, died on Saturday in a Sydney hospital. Humphries, best known for his impersonation of a suburban housewife in the guise of Everage, "passed away peacefully" surrounded by family, his publicist said. AFP

ATHENS

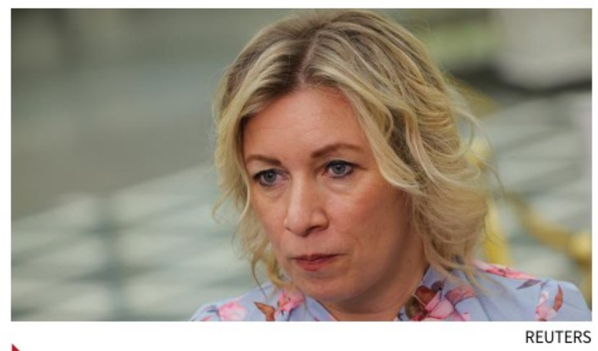
Greece Prime Minister kicks off countdown to general election

REUTERS

With general elections set for May 21, Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis called for dissolving Parliament. Mitsotakis, whose term would have ended in July and holds a slim lead in polls, is seeking re-election on pledges of safety improvements after the nation's worst rail disaster, and strengthening the economy. AFP

MOSCOW

In a tit-for-tat move, Russia expels more than 20 German diplomats



REUTERS

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman announced the expulsion of "more than 20" German diplomats as a retaliatory measure for "mass expulsion" of Russian embassy staff from Berlin. Moscow will also limit the maximum number of employees in German diplomatic missions in the country. AFP

Sudan fighting enters second week as evacuation begins

More than 150 people from different countries reach Saudi Arabia; fighting resumes in Khartoum after a temporary truce leads to a brief respite from gunfire on Friday, the first day of Id-ul-Fitr

Agence France-Presse
KHARTOUM

Safe cover: Evacuees from Sudan welcomed by Saudi Royal Navy officials as they arrive at the Jeddah Sea Port on Saturday. REUTERS

More than 150 people reached the safety of Saudi Arabia on Saturday in the first announced evacuation of civilians from Sudan, where fighting between the Army and paramilitaries entered a second week following a brief lull.

Foreign nations said they are preparing for the evacuation of thousands more of their nationals, though Sudan's main airport remains closed.

Fighting has left hundreds dead and thousands wounded while survivors cope with shortages of electricity and food.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry announced the "safe arrival" of 91 of its citizens along with nationals from Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Egypt, Tunisia, Pakistan, India, Bulgaria, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Canada and Burkina Faso.

As the kingdom's naval forces transported the civilians, including diplomats and international officials, across the Red Sea from Port Sudan to Jeddah, fighting resumed in Sudan's capital Khartoum after a temporary truce saw gunfire momentarily die down on Friday, the first day of Id-ul-Fitr.

Earlier on Saturday, Sudan's Army said its chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan had received calls from leaders of multiple countries to "facilitate and guarantee safety for evacuating citizens".

Gen. Burhan said that the Army was in control of "all airports, except for Khartoum airport" and one in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur.

Supreme Court preserves women's access to abortion pill in U.S. for now

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

Curbs lifted: Flowers in the shape of a uterus near the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington on Friday. AP

The Supreme Court on Friday preserved women's access to a drug used in the most common method of abortion, rejecting lower-court restrictions while a lawsuit continues.

The justices granted emergency requests from the Biden administration and New York-based Danco Laboratories, maker of the drug mifepristone. They are appealing a lower court ruling that would roll back Food and Drug Administration approval of mifepristone.

The drug has been approved for use in the U.S. since 2000 and more than 5 million people have used it. Mifepristone is used in combination with a second drug, misoprostol, in more than half of all abortions in the U.S.

A year's validity

The court's action on Friday almost certainly will leave access to mifepristone unchanged at least into next year, as appeals play out, including a potential appeal to the high court. The next stop for the case is at the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, which has set arguments in the case for May 17.

Two of the nine justices – Samuel Alito, the author of last year's decision overturning *Roe v Wade*, and Clarence Thomas – voted to allow restrictions to take effect, and Justice Alito issued a four-page dissent. No other justices commented on the court's one-paragraph order, and the court did not release a full vote breakdown.

Biden's support

President Joe Biden praised the high court for keeping mifepristone available while the court fight continues.

"The stakes could not be higher for women across America. I will continue to fight politically-driven attacks on women's health. But let's be clear – the American people must continue to use their vote as their voice, and elect a Congress who will pass a law restoring the protections of Roe v. Wade," Mr. Biden said in a statement.

In Portugal visit, Lula backs Russia-Ukraine talks to end the war

Agence France-Presse
LISBON

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

Brazilian President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva on Saturday again refused to be drawn into the war in Ukraine, calling for a "negotiated" settlement between Kyiv and Moscow.

Lula, who is seeking to revive Brazil's role as a dealmaker and go-between, has angered Ukraine by saying Kyiv shared blame for the war and has not joined Western nations in imposing sanctions on Moscow or supplying ammunition to Kyiv.

Negotiated solution

"While my government condemns the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity, we support a negotiated political solution to the conflict," Lula told journalists after meeting Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa in Lisbon.

"We urgently need a group of countries to sit round a table with both Ukraine and Russia," he said. "Brazil does not want to take part in this war. Brazil wants to build peace."

Portugal's President said: "President Lula believes the road to a just and lasting peace implies making negotiation a priority.

"Portugal has a different position. We think that for a road to peace to become a possibility, Ukraine must first have the right to respond to the invasion."

Election commission official shot dead by rebels in Myanmar

Agence France-Presse
YANGON

The deputy head of Myanmar's election commission was shot dead in Yangon on Saturday by rebel fighters, the military said, in the latest killing of a high-profile individual linked to the country's junta.

Myanmar's military has led a bloody crackdown on dissent after seizing power in a coup more than two years ago, sparking social unrest and an economic crisis.

Self-declared civilian "People's Defence Forces" have sprung up in opposition to the junta, with their fighters targeting officials perceived to be working with the military.

Deputy director Sai Kyaw Thu of the Union Election Commission was shot dead in the township of Thingangyun in eastern Yangon, the Army's information team said.

It said anti-coup "People's Defence Forces" were responsible but did not give further details.

The military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in February 2021 over unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud in elections the previous year.

Fresh polls

It has tasked the junta-stacked election commission with holding fresh polls, which opponents of the military say cannot possibly be free or fair.

Last month the commission dissolved Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party over its failure to re-register under tough new military-drafted electoral rules.

Myanmar's main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, has already registered, state media reported Friday.

Philippines raises concerns over Taiwan during Chinese official's visit

Agence France-Presse
MANILA

The Philippines' top diplomat has expressed his concern to Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang over escalating tensions in waters around Taiwan, Manila said on Saturday.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo met Mr. Qin as the two countries seek to deepen economic ties while also managing their dispute in the South China Sea, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a statement after the talks.

"Secretary Manalo reaffirmed the Philippines' adherence to the One China Policy, while at the same time expressing concern over the escalating tensions across the Taiwan Strait," the DFA said.

China claims Taiwan as its territory and has vowed to bring the island under its control one day, by force if necessary.

Mr. Qin described China and the Philippines as "close neighbours across the sea".

'Turbulent situation'

"Amid the fluid and turbulent regional situation, a healthy and stable China-Philippines relationship is not only meeting the aspirations of our two peoples, but also in line with the common aspirations of regional countries," Mr. Qin said during the talks.

He told a forum in Shanghai on Friday that recent rhetoric accusing China of disrupting peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait could have dangerous consequences.

"Such claims go against basic common sense on international relations and historical justice," he said.

China and the Philippines are locked in a bitter maritime dispute in the strategic South China Sea.

President Ferdinand Marcos, after meeting Mr. Qin on Saturday, sought to downplay the tensions.

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Seven worst years for polar ice melting in past decade: study

Press Trust of India

Scientists report that the seven worst years for polar ice sheets melting and losing ice have occurred during the past decade, with 2019 being the worst year on record.

Combining 50 satellite surveys of Antarctica and Greenland taken between 1992 and 2020, the international team of researchers have found that the melting ice sheets now account for a quarter of all sea level rise, a fivefold increase since the 1990s.

The findings of the team, led by the Northumbria University's Centre for Polar Observations and Modelling, U.K., were published in the journal, *Earth System Science Data*.

In their study, the researchers found that earth's polar ice sheets lost 7,560 billion tonnes of ice between 1992 and 2020, which is equivalent to an ice cube that would be 20 km in height.

They also found that the polar ice sheets have together lost ice in every year of the satellite record, and the seven highest melting years have occurred in the past decade.

Melting year

The satellite records showed that 2019 was the record melting year when the ice sheets lost a staggering 612 billion tonnes of ice.

They said that the loss, driven by an Arctic summer heatwave, led to record melting from Greenland peaking at 444 billion tonnes that year.

Antarctica was found to have lost 168 billion tonnes of ice, the sixth highest on record, due to the continued speedup of glaciers in West Antarctica and record melting from the Antarctic Peninsula.

The East Antarctic ice sheet was found to remain close to a state of balance, as it had throughout the satellite era.

Melting of the polar ice sheets has found to cause a rise of 21 millimetre (mm) in global sea level since 1992, almost two thirds, or 13.5 mm, of which has originated from Greenland and one third, or 7.4 mm, from Antarctica.

Fivefold increase

The researchers say that there has been a fivefold increase in melting since the early 1990s. While ice sheet melting accounted for only a small fraction (5.6% of sea level rise), they are now responsible for more than a quarter (25.6% of all sea level rise).

"After a decade of work, we are finally at the stage where we can continuously update our assessments of ice sheet mass balance as there are enough satellites in space monitoring them," said Andrew Shepherd, head of the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Northumbria University.

Stray dog population control is dogged by bad science

Reckless feeding tends to congregate dogs and leads to pack formation, territoriality and aggression even amongst sterilised dogs; this behaviour is usually triggered at night, leading to attacks on people

Abi T. Vanak

The horror stories continue to pour in. Children, usually from poor families or in rural areas, are being hunted and killed by homeless dogs. State and central governments seem to be helpless to ensure the safety of people on the streets, from what has clearly become a human rights issue and a public health crisis.

The main culprit behind this is the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules that were first introduced in 2001 by the Ministry of Culture, and now replaced by even more absurd ABC Rules, 2023. This policy, despite the protestation by those who promoted it, is completely lacking in both science as well as logic.

The policy aims to implement a technique called 'catch-neuter-vaccinate-release' to control populations of free-ranging dogs and cats.

Unimplementable

However, despite 20 years of this policy and hundreds of crores of rupees being spent, dog population in India is now more than 65 million. Proponents of this method aver that the only reason it did not work is because it has not been implemented properly. But what they fail to understand is that it is unimplementable from a scientific, logistic and economic perspective.

The ABC programme does not seem to have any benchmarks or targets. For example, before the start of the programme, a municipal corporation would be required to estimate the base population of dogs to be sterilised. It would then need to set targets for population reduction within a reasonable time period, say five years, and then calculate how many would need to be sterilised to achieve this objective.

However, municipalities set targets for sterilisation based on budgets and available facilities. In most cases, only a small fraction of the population is sterilised, and in many cases, the programme itself is discontinued after a few cycles.

Dogs are incredibly fecund animals, and reproduce at a high rate if enough resources are available. Both field and modelling studies show that nearly 90% of the dog population needs to be sterilised over a short period of time to achieve a sustained population reduction over a 10-15-year period. This 'minor' detail is conveniently skipped by most proponents of the ABC programme.

Feeding dogs

The other major problem is that the ABC Rules, 2023, bizarrely require people to feed dogs, wherever they may be. Most people either throw a few biscuits on the roadside or leave leftover food outside their houses, but some people, with almost religious fervour, go out of their way to feed dozens of dogs.

Reckless feeding tends to congregate dogs and leads to pack formation, territoriality and aggression even amongst sterilised dogs. This behaviour is usually triggered at night. At its very worst, this frenzied hunting behaviour can end up causing severe injury or even death due to mauling, especially of small children and the elderly. Another study also found that in urban areas, dogs were the second leading cause of road accidents.

Despite all these negatives, why does the government persist with a policy that is cruel at multiple levels? It is cruel to dogs, since homeless life on the streets is not easy, with accidents, disease, wanton cruelty and constant fear being their normal state. It is cruel to ordinary citizens, depriving people of their right to life, free movement, and a safe environment. In many areas, dogs are also leading causes of harm to wildlife, and cause immense loss of biodiversity.

The unkindest cut of all is that the ABC Rules ban the euthanasia of rabid animals, making India the only country in the world to follow such a cruel practice.

However, it does not have to be this way. Solving this problem requires a multi-pronged approach, and some difficult decisions. Strict pet ownership laws, a ban on irresponsible feeding in public places, and encouraging adoption and long-term sheltering of homeless dogs will result in win-win solutions.

Expenses

Unlike the ABC programme, the expenses incurred in setting up shelters will at least result in removing dogs from streets permanently, whereas the ABC Rules require that the dogs be released back into the same area, where they can be a nuisance in perpetuity. The same people who feed dogs on the streets can supervise shelters to ensure that they are well maintained and also feed them there.

If the "greatness of our nation and its moral progress" is to be judged by how we treat animals, then surely we should not be making the worst enemies of our best friends.

(Abi T. Vanak is a leading authority on the ecology of dogs, and a long-time advocate for true dog welfare. He is currently the Director for the Centre for Policy Design, ATREE, Bengaluru)

ABC programme is destined to fail

The main culprit behind stray dogs attacking/killing people is the Animal Birth Control Rules first introduced in 2001

- The ABC programme aims to implement a technique called 'catch-neuter-vaccinate-release' to control populations of free-ranging dogs and cats
- Despite 20 years of this policy and hundreds of crores of rupees being spent, the dog population in India is now more than 65 million
- In most cases, only a small fraction of the population is sterilised by municipalities, and in many cases, the programme itself is discontinued after a few cycles
- Studies show that nearly 90% of the dog population needs to be sterilised over a short period of time to achieve a sustained population reduction over a 10-15-year period
- The ABC Rules 2023 bizarrely require people to feed dogs, wherever they may be. Reckless feeding tends to congregate dogs and leads to pack formation, territoriality and aggression even amongst sterilised dogs
- Strict pet ownership laws, a ban on irresponsible feeding in public places, and encouraging adoption and long-term sheltering of homeless dogs will result in win-win solutions

Flawed: The ABC programme is unimplementable from a scientific, logistic and economic perspective

Microbes at the top of the world

SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. Balasubramanian

An article, *Genetic analysis of the frozen microbiome at 7,900 metres above sea level on the South Col of Sagarmatha (Mount Everest)*, by Dr. N.B. Dragone and others in journal *Arctic, Antarctic, and Alpine Research* examines the human microbiota on the inhospitable slopes of Mount Everest.

They were able to collect microbial communities in sediment samples left by human climbers on the South Col of Mount Everest, 7,900 metres above sea level (msl).

The South Col is the ridge which separates Mt. Everest from Lhotse – the fourth highest mountain on earth. The two peaks are only three kilometres apart. At 7,900 msl, the South Col is rather inhospitable – a heat wave in July 2022 led to a record high temperature of minus 1.4 degree Celsius.

Barring humans, visible signs of life have been left behind. The last visible residents are seen at 6,700 msl – a few species of moss and a jumping spider that feeds on frozen insects carried by the wind.

At high altitudes, there is low oxygen (7.8% against 20.9% at sea level), strong winds, temperature usually below minus 15 degree Celsius, and high levels of UV radiation. All these make life processes difficult. And as there is an interdependence among species of all sizes in all ecosystems, even microbes cannot sustain themselves.

Wind and humans

But microbes keep arriving, carried by either birds, animals, or winds. Up to about 6,000 msl, dust particles, less than 20 micrometre in diameter, are blown in by the winds. Some of this dust originates in the Sahara Desert, which explains why a wide range of microflora are found at these altitudes. Above 7,000 msl, it is mostly winds and humans that act as carriers.

Transported: A cosmopolitan human signature is seen in the microbes collected at the South Col on Mount Everest. GETTY IMAGES

Using sophisticated methods such as 16S and 18S rRNA sequencing, the microbe hunters were able to identify the bacteria and other microorganisms found on the South Col. A cosmopolitan human signature is seen in the microbes collected here. Also found are *modestobacter altitudinis* and the fungus, *naganishia*, which are known to be UV-resistant survivors.

Who gave the name 'sagarmatha' to Mt. Everest? Nepal's eminent historian, late Baburam Acharya, gave it the Nepali name, *sagarmatha*, in the 1960s.

Kangchenjunga peak

In 1847, Andrew Waugh, British Surveyor General of India, found a peak in the eastern end of the Himalayas which was higher than the Kangchenjunga – considered as the highest peak in the world at that time. His predecessor, Sir George Everest, was interested in high-altitude hills and had deputed Waugh to take charge. In true colonial spirit, Waugh called it the Mount Everest.

Researchers collected microbial communities in sediment samples left by human climbers on Mt. Everest

The Indian mathematician and surveyor, Radhanath Sikdar, was an able mathematician. He was the first person to show that Mount Everest (then known as peak XV) was the world's highest peak.

George Everest had appointed Sikdar to the post of 'Computer' in the Survey of India in 1831.

In 1852, Sikdar, with the help of a special device, recorded the height of 'Peak 15' at 8,839 metres. However, it was officially announced in March 1856.

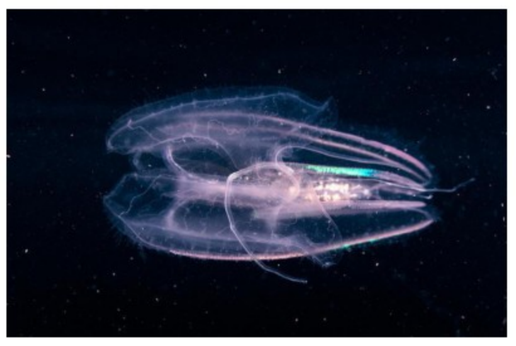
SNAPSHOTS

Elephant seals sleep for two hours a day during short dives

Rivalling the record for least sleep among mammals, northern elephant seals sleep a mere two hours a day, split into a series of nap-like "sleeping dives" at depths not typically occupied by predators. The findings (*Science*), which leveraged a new tool to detect sleep at sea, provide insights into the sleeping behaviour of animals who must sleep while avoiding predation. These seals took short naps (fewer than 20 minutes) while diving several hundred metres below the surface.

Private land conservation important for Brazil Cerrado

Areas set aside for conservation within private lands could play a valuable role in protecting the biodiversity of the Brazilian Cerrado (*Science*). The analysis in this region, where private agricultural land use often conflicts with conventional conservation approaches, suggests that sharing the responsibility for protecting biodiversity with the private sector can increase international commitments to avoid biodiversity loss. Private protected areas accommodate up to 14.5% of threatened vertebrate species' ranges.



Ctenophora neural net shows the origin of nervous system

The evolution of the nervous system may have followed multiple paths and risen independently in two early lineages of animals, as per a study of ctenophores – marine invertebrates that contain an elaborate nerve net nervous system, commonly known as comb jellies. The findings (*Science*) show that the nerve net of ctenophores is different than nerve nets found in species from other lineages of animals, providing new insights into the complex origins of the nervous system.

Question Corner

Grey hair

What is the cause of hair turning grey?

Certain stem cells have a unique ability to move between growth compartments in hair follicles, but get stuck as people age and they lose their ability to mature and maintain hair colour, a release says. The new work (*Nature*) focused on cells in the skin of mice and also found in humans called melanocyte stem cells (McSCs).

During normal hair growth, the melanocyte stem cells continually move back and forth on the maturity axis as they transit between compartments of the developing hair follicle. Researchers at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine found that as hair ages, sheds, and then repeatedly grows back, increasing numbers of McSCs get stuck in the stem cell compartment. There, they remain and do not mature into the transit-amplifying state. The stuck McSCs ceased their regenerative behaviour as they were no longer exposed to WNT signalling, which stimulates the McSCs to mature and produce pigment in new hair follicles, that continued to grow.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

PROFILES

A warlord of his own

Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' Dagolo

Hailing from a nomadic Arab community in Sudan's restive Darfur, the paramilitary commander, who seized the vacuum left by the fall of Omar Bashir to engineer his own rise, is now challenging the armed forces, pushing the country into the brink of another civil war

Stanly Johny

"In accordance with the agreement, we will stick to every single letter we have agreed on...," Mohamed Hamdan Dagolo, head of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary, said in an interview in August 2019, a few days after the military and a pro-democracy civilian movement signed a power sharing deal. Those were better days for the resource-rich African country. In April that year, Omar al-Bashir, the dictator who ruled Sudan through an iron fist for three decades, was forced out of power amid mass protests. The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), the regular Army, and the RSF agreed to a time-bound transition into civilian rule. But the bonhomie didn't last long.

While Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the SAF chief, was considered the most powerful man in the post-Bashir Sudan, the real dark horse was Mr. Dagolo, popularly known as 'Hemedti' (Little Mohamed). His RSF, which rose from the bloody civil war in Sudan's Darfur region, had its own command structure, directly under Bashir. Once Bashir was gone, Hemedti emerged as a new power centre. A man of his own. When a transition government was formed in 2019, Hemedti became its second in command, after Gen. Burhan. He welcomed "the new Sudan". But the new Sudan he envisaged was a fiefdom that's loyal to his command.

In 2021, two years after Bashir's ouster, Hemedti would team up with Gen. Burhan to orchestrate a coup and expel the civilian leadership from the transition government. The General and the warlord then agreed to share power in a delicate deal, but it was only the beginning of a bitter power struggle that would push the country of 45 million to the brink of a civil war.

Two years of brinkmanship led to open fighting last week with Hemedti and Gen. Burhan accusing each other of treason. The World Health Organization says more than 400 people have already been killed and thousands more injured. On Friday evening, the RSF declared a temporary Id truce, but there was no real intention on either side to end the fighting. Hemedti now warns that he would bring Gen. Burhan "to justice" or he can "die like a dog".

The man from Darfur

Hemedti's rise from an outsider warlord who cut his teeth in Darfur's civil war to one of the most powerful men in the country is almost like a fairy tale in Sudan. Now in his late 40s, Hemedti, a nephew of Juma Dagolo, the chief of an Abbala (camel-herding) nomadic community of Riziegat Arabs, was an 'emir' (commander) of the notorious Janjaweed Arab militia, the earlier avatar of the RSF. The Janjaweed's roots go back to the civil war in neighbouring Chad, where former Libyan leader Muammer Gaddafi was backing rebel leader Acheikh Ibn-Oumar against the regime of President Hissène Habré, which was backed by the U.S. and France. When the rebels suffered setbacks in the civil war, Qaddafi turned to arm local Arab nomads in eastern Chad bordering Sudan. After the 1987 truce in Chad, the Arab militias retreated to Sudan's Darfur region, where Khartoum was also arming Arab nomads against local African tribes. These two Arab groups made up the Janjaweed (literally Spirit on the Horse), which in the following years would emerge as a paramilitary force backed by Khartoum.

By the early 2000s, the civil war in Sudan escalated with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) carrying out repeated attacks against government positions. President Bashir's response was to strengthen the Janjaweed, who unleashed brutal violence in Darfur. They would beat back the rebels but were accused of carrying out genocidal acts against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa peoples of the region, all African communities.

This period also saw Hemedti rising through the ranks of the Janjaweed. He became a commander of the Border Guards in 2003 and in 2008, security adviser to South Darfur's Governor. When President Bashir decided to form the RSF in 2013, he picked Hemedti, then a young, loyal Arab warlord, as its commander.

ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

Bashir's plan was to build a parallel security organisation that could be used to not just quell rebellions against his regime but also to protect it from potential coups from the Army. Hemedti drew mostly from the Janjaweed to build the new paramilitary force. Initially, it was under the command of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), which was also created in 2013 to fight against rebel groups in Sudan. Within years, with Hemedti's quick rise as a confidant of Bashir, the RSF came directly under the President's command. Despite calls for its integration with the regular Army, the RSF remained autonomous. In the following years, the RSF acted as Bashir's feared private army. It was deployed to quell rebellions and protests, along with the SAF. It faced allegations of torture, rape and mass killings. Bashir was unmoved. But what he didn't realise then was that his favourite warlord had his own plans and ambitions.

The battle of Generals

When mass protests shook Sudan in 2019, Bashir turned to the RSF once again. In June, Hemedti's forces attacked peaceful protesters in Khartoum. Hundreds were killed. Bodies turned up in the Nile. But even the RSF could not quell the revolutionary spirit of the protesters. When the Army and the RSF realised that continuing agitations threatened to take away the privileges they enjoyed under the regime Bashir built, they decided to sacrifice the head of the regime to protect themselves. Bashir was ousted in what the Sudanese call a "revolution". But for Hemedti, it was an opportunity to formalise his influence in the country. For years, he was a warlord commanding a paramilitary force. Now, he is Number 2 in the transition government.

But Gen. Burhan, the Army chief, was wary of Hemedti's rise and his growing regional clout. Hemedti has powerful friends. He is a close ally of Isaias Afwerki, the President of Eritrea, and Khalifa Haftar, the Libyan warlord who controls parts of the country. Hemedti had sent his RSF soldiers to Libya to fight alongside the forces of Gen. Hafter, who was backed by the UAE, against the Tripoli-based government. The RSF was also dispatched to Yemen to fight alongside the Saudi coalition against the Shia Houthi rebels. Hemedti also provides security to the gold mines in Sudan that are linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of Russian private military company Wagner. On the other side, Gen. Burhan is a close ally of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the President of Egypt.

When Gen. Burhan and Hemedti fell apart, the former sought a tactical alliance with Sudan's civilian leadership. In December, the military and the protesters agreed to a two-year transition plan as part of which the RSF would be integrated into the regular military, which would be commanded by Gen. Burhan. A final agreement was due to be signed in April. Sensing threats to his position and ambitions, Hemedti demanded 10 years for the integration. When the Army rejected his demands, a conflict looked inevitable. And it broke out on April 15.

For Sudan's revolutionaries, who wanted a peaceful transition to civilian rule and democracy, the battle between the Generals is the last straw. They wanted to bury the old regime, but now, the old regime, with all its repressive organs, is back with two heads, with the promised revolution stuck between them.

THE GIST

- Now in his late 40s, Hemedti, a nephew of Juma Dagolo, the chief of an Abbala (camel-herding) nomadic community of Riziegat Arabs, was an 'emir' (commander) of the notorious Janjaweed Arab militia
- When Omar Bashir decided to form the RSF in 2013, he picked Hemedti, then a young, loyal Arab warlord, as its commander, who drew largely from the Janjaweed to build the new militia
- After Bashir's fall, he emerged as Number 2 in the transitional government; he then joined hands with Army chief Gen. Burhan to orchestrate a coup against the civilian leadership, but later fell out with Gen. Burhan

Voice of dissent

Vladimir Kara-Murza

The Kremlin critic has been sentenced for 25 years by a Russian court over his criticism of the Ukraine war, the harshest punishment handed to any opposition leader since Putin rose to power

Saptaparno Ghosh

"This day will come as inevitably as spring follows even the coldest winter. And then our society will open its eyes and be horrified by what terrible crimes were committed on its behalf. From this realisation, from this reflection, the long, difficult but vital path towards the recovery and restoration of Russia, its return to the community of civilised countries, will begin," said the 41-year-old Vladimir Kara-Murza, defiant from his glass cage inside a Russian courtroom, on April 10.

The journalist and Opposition leader was being tried on charges of treason and "knowingly spreading false information" about Russia's actions in Ukraine. He was sentenced for 25 years in prison - the harshest to any Kremlin critic since Vladimir Putin's rise to power in 1999.

Mr. Kara-Murza possesses dual citizenship of Russia and Britain. He was arrested in April last year in Moscow after, in an interview with *CNN*, he alleged that Russia was run by a "regime of murderers". Notwithstanding friends asking him not to visit Moscow during the time, he chose to campaign against the war. According to him, he had no moral right to engage in Russian politics while staying abroad.

ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

Mr. Kara-Murza is from a family of renowned journalists, academics and dissidents. His father, Vladimir Kara-Murza Sr., was a Soviet-era dissident, who began his career on *Channel One* before moving to Russia's *NTV* in 1993. Particularly known for hosting '*Today at Midnight*', Kara-Murza Sr. resigned from the channel when it was bought by state-owned Gazprom. According to *Moscow Times*, Mr. Kara-Murza's grandfather Alexei was a historian who survived a Soviet labour camp in the 1930s before going on to cover the Battle of Stalingrad in the early 1940s.

The Muscovite moved to the U.K. with his mother while he was a teenager. He would later attend the Cambridge University to study history. However, he kept returning to Russia.

Having once pondered about a professional career as a musician, he made a "conscious decision" towards politics and public life. This partly emanated from his family legacy and the events unfolding in the 1990s' Russia. Mr. Kara-Murza once mentioned at a forum about his first "conscious political memory" being the 1991 coup attempt in the last days of the Soviet Union, when unarmed Muscovites turned away Army-tanks. The 10-year-old then learnt, "However strong a dictatorship, when the people are ready to stand up for their freedom, all that strength becomes meaningless."

Electoral politics

He forayed into electoral politics with the "free but unfair" Duma elections of 2003. Jointly backed by the two largest Opposition parties – the SPS and the Yabloko – he contested as the parliamentary candidate from Chertanovsky district. The support was particularly interesting because the two had decided to contest the election separately, having failed to establish a combined front. According to him, this was a "serious mistake".

The election, he adds, witnessed "the merger" between United Russia (Mr. Putin's party) and the state bureaucracy. Advertising agencies refused to take his campaign posters and his appearances on local TV were disrupted citing "technical reasons".

"The year 2003 was a turning point in the evolution of Vladimir Putin's regime from a 'hybrid, semi-authoritarian political system' to one marked by 'full-fledged authoritarianism'," he later said.

But Mr. Kara-Murza stands proud of his political activism. "I am proud that Boris Nemtsov brought me into politics. And I hope that he is not ashamed of me." Nemtsov was among the founding members of the Opposition party, Union of Right Forces. They first met during the 1999 Duma campaign when Mr. Kara-Murza was a young reporter, as per Russian news website *Meduza*. On February 2015, Nemtsov, a physicist and an outspoken critic of President Putin, was shot dead on a bridge near the Kremlin in Moscow. Today, Mr. Kara-Murza, Nemtsov's protégé who survived two poisoning attempts, has been thrown into jail.

Congress's man for all seasons

D.K. Shivakumar

The Vokkaliga strongman, who is leading the party from the front in the May 10 Assembly election, has made his ambition for the CM's post public

Nagesh Prabhu

The seven-time MLA and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president, D.K. Shivakumar, is among the richest politicians in the State. Hailing from a modest agrarian Vokkaliga family, his rise and dominance in Karnataka politics is the result of hard work and assiduous grassroots management, coupled with financial muscle. Over the years, he has earned his stripes as the Congress's trouble-shooter in Karnataka.

The 60-year-old, who declared total family assets of ₹1,358 crore in his election affidavit this year, is leading the Congress from the front for the coming Karnataka Assembly election, even as he is under the investigation of multiple agencies for his alleged money laundering and income tax evasion cases.

Mr. Shivakumar, who was arrested in connection with a money laundering case in 2019, had played a crucial role in keeping the party's flock together after the 2018 Assembly election, resulting in the Congress going on to stitch a post-poll alliance. This denied the BJP, the single largest party, a chance to form the government. The Congress linked his arrest to this episode and billed it "vendetta" politics. Later, he secured bail and walked out of Delhi's Tihar Jail after spending 50 days. The MLA, who has his own support base in the Old Mysore region, was brought in an open car in a procession from the airport, in an attempt to cast his arrest as an "insult" to the Vokkaliga community.

ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Electoral debut

Mr. Shivakumar's first foray into electoral politics was in the 1985 Assembly election against former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, a formidable leader of the undivided Janata Party in the erstwhile Sathanur constituency. Mr. Shivakumar lost that battle. In the 1989 Assembly election, the Congress returned to power and Mr. Shivakumar won as the party candidate from Sathanur. He became a Minister for Prisons at the age of 30 in the S. Bangarappa Cabinet in 1991-92. Since then, he has not lost an election.

Mr. Shivakumar rose to political prominence in the S.M. Krishna-led Congress government (1999-2004) by holding the Urban Development and Cooperation portfolio. Many political commentators see this as the period of the meteoric rise in his fortunes, in both politics and business.

In simultaneous elections held to the Lok Sabha and the Karnataka Assembly in 2004, Mr. Shivakumar fought hard for the victory of TV journalist and Congress candidate Tejaswini Gowda (now BJP MLC), against Mr. Gowda in the Kanakapura Lok Sabha constituency. In the Assembly election, the Congress lost but Mr. Shivakumar managed to win the seat. In the Dharam Singh-led Congress-JD (S) government (2004-05), Mr. Gowda is learnt to have "settled scores" by keeping the S.M. Krishna-Shivakumar duo out of power.

The Congress returned to power in 2013 and Mr. Shivakumar was inducted into the Cabinet by Mr. Siddaramaiah, though little later following allegations of the "tainted image" against the former. In 2014, the BJP swept the Lok Sabha election but Mr. Shivakumar ensured the victory of his brother, D.K. Suresh. Now, Mr. Suresh is the lone Congress Lok Sabha member from Karnataka.

His proximity to the central leadership and ability for micro political management have made him the go-to man for situations such as safeguarding MLAs from Gujarat at a resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru in 2017 or ensuring the victory of Ahmed Patel in Rajya Sabha polls in the same year. The resort they were staying in was searched by IT officials. In June 2002, Mr. Shivakumar conducted a similar task when Maharashtra Congress Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh faced a no-trust motion.

This time, in the game of one-upmanship with Mr. Siddaramaiah, Mr. Shivakumar has publicly announced his ambition of becoming the CM. The Vokkaliga strongman, who said he will remove his beard after becoming the CM, believes this election is his best chance for winning the top job, though he has repeatedly stated that it is ultimately the party high command that will take the call.

INBRIEF

'Unsold housing stocks shrank 6% in Jan.-March in 14 cities'

Unsold housing stocks in India fell 6% during January-March to almost 5.18 lakh units across 14 cities compared with the previous quarter on better sales, as per data analytic firm PropEquity. "The residential market in India saw significant growth in Q1 2023," said Samir Jasuja, Founder and MD at PropEquity. "Market resurrection has been brought about by the recovery trend since last year, with quarterly sales surpassing new launches in this quarter by 32%." PTI

Airport service aggregator Dreamfolks rebrands arm

Airport service aggregator DreamFolks Services Ltd. said its subsidiary, Vidsur Golf, that provides access to golf courses, has been rebranded as GolfKlik. "This decision is a major milestone for DreamFolks, as it continues to grow, expand," the firm said adding it can now provide its clients 'exceptional' golfing experiences. Leveraging GolfKlik's expertise, DreamFolks plans to expand its global footprint, offering clients access to more than 1,800 golf courses worldwide.

'Transfer of Jaipur airport to Adani group exempt from GST'

The transfer of Jaipur international airport operations by Airports Authority of India (AAI) to the Adani group is exempt from Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Authority for Advance Ruling (AAR) has said. The AAI had approached the AAR seeking a ruling on whether transfer of business to Adani Jaipur International Airport Ltd. is to be treated as a 'going concern' and whether GST is leviable on transfer of assets. PTI

ICICI Bank Q4 profit surges 30% to ₹9,122 cr.

Lender's business boosted by 22.7% year-on-year growth in retail loans, profitability buoyed as net interest income jumps 40.2% to ₹17,667 crore last quarter, lifting net interest margin to 4.90%; bank says gross NPA ratio declined to 2.81% as on March 31, 2023, from 3.07% as on December 31, 2022

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

ICICI Bank Ltd. reported fourth-quarter standalone net profit surged 30% to ₹9,122 crore backed by good growth in retail loans, an improvement in asset quality and a 40.2% jump in net interest income to ₹17,667 crore.

"There was all round growth in loan portfolio and we are following a risk calibrated approach," executive director Sandeep Batra said on an earnings conference call.

Stating that loan portfolio of all segments including housing grew during the quarter despite the rise in interest rates, Mr. Batra said the bank's retail loan portfolio grew by 22.7% year-on-year and 5.4% sequentially, and comprised 54.7% of the total loan portfolio as on March 31.

The Indian economy has continued to remain resilient and financial stability has been maintained while inflation has moderated, he added.

Net interest margin improved to 4.90% in the March quarter from 4.00% in the year-earlier period.

Fair winds: Profit was lifted by improvement in net interest margin as interest rates rose and credit demand stayed strong. REUTERS

The bank suffered a treasury loss of ₹40 crore in Q4 compared with a gain of ₹129 crore in the year-earlier period.

The business banking portfolio grew by 34.9% and the SME business, comprising borrowers with a turnover of less than ₹250 crore grew by 19.2%. The domestic corporate portfolio grew by 21.2%.

Total advances increased by 18.7% during the quarter to ₹10,19,638 crore. Total period-end deposits increased by 10.9% to ₹11,80,841 crore.

Bad loans shrink

The gross NPA ratio slid to 2.81% at March 31, from 3.07% as on December 31, 2022, Mr. Batra said.

The net non-performing assets declined by 25.9% to ₹5,155 crore. The net NPA ratio eased to 0.48%, from 0.76% at March 31, 2022.

He said the net addition from gross NPAs, excluding write-offs and sale, was ₹14 crore, compared with ₹1,119 crore in the preceding quarter. The gross NPA additions were ₹4,297 crore, compared with ₹5,723 crore in Q3.

The bank's total capital adequacy ratio at March 31 was 18.34% and Tier-1 capital adequacy was 17.60% compared with the minimum regulatory requirements of 11.70% and 9.70%, respectively.

The board has recommended a dividend of ₹8 per share.

Yes Bank Q4 net dips 45% to ₹202 cr. on provisioning, asset quality rises

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Yes Bank Ltd. reported fourth-quarter net profit slid 45% year-on-year (YoY) to ₹202 crore on account of higher provisioning.

Net interest income (NII) rose 15.7% YoY to ₹2,105 crore, the bank said.

For the financial year ended March 31, net profit slid 32.7% to ₹717 crore on accelerated provisioning. In FY23, NII rose 21.8% to ₹7,918 crore. The net interest margin for Q4FY23 at 2.8% rose almost 30 basis points. FY23 NIM at 2.6% was also up 30 bps.

In Q4, provisions at ₹618 crore more than doubled, the bank said in a filing.

Banking on recovery: Total recoveries and upgrades for FY23 at ₹6,120 crore was ahead of guidance of ₹5,000 crore. FILE PHOTO

Total provisions for FY23 at ₹2,220 crore was up 50%, the lender said.

Net advances at ₹2,03,269 crore grew 12.3%. Total deposits rose 10.3% to ₹2,17,502 crore.

The bank said it witnessed a significant improvement in asset quality during Q4. Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio stood at 2.2% compared with 13.9% in the year-earlier period.

Net NPA ratio stood at 0.8% compared with 4.5% in the year-earlier period.

Lower slippages

The bank said slippages continued to trend lower to ₹4,775 crore in FY23 from ₹5,795 crore in FY22.

The private sector lender said resolution momentum continued to be strong with total recoveries and upgrades for FY23 at ₹6,120 crore, well ahead of guidance of ₹5,000 crore.

In Q4 FY23,cash recoveries and upgrades stood at ₹1,733 crore.

'India among fastest growing economies amid uncertainties'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Deepak Parekh

Against the uncertain global backdrop, India has increasingly been in the spotlight for being amongst the fastest-growing major economies helped by a strong consumption story, banker Deepak Parekh said.

India is not immune to global disruptions, so some slowdown in growth is inevitable, he said, adding, since India is a domestic, consumption-based economy, India is less dependent on the global economy compared with countries that rely heavily on exports.

"As a country, we are fortunate to see more tailwinds than headwinds. What is working well for India is the fact that we have political stability," Mr. Parekh, chairman of HDFC Ltd., said at an event.

Alphabet's Pichai reaps over $200 mn amid cost-cutting

Reuters

Alphabet Inc. Chief Executive Sundar Pichai received total compensation of about $226 million in 2022, more than 800 times the median employee's pay, the company said in a securities filing on Friday.

Mr. Pichai's compensation included stock awards of about $218 million, the filing showed.

The 50-year-old Chief Executive Officer of parent Alphabet and the search giant Google was paid a salary of $2 million in 2022, a figure that has remained unchanged over the last three years, as per the filing. His total compensation amounted to $6.3 million in 2021, a year in which he received no stock award.

Sundar Pichai

The pay disparity comes at a time when Alphabet has been cutting jobs globally. The Mountain View, California-based company announced plans to cut 12,000 jobs around the world in January, equivalent to 6% of its global workforce.

Employee walkouts

Early this month, hundreds of Google employees staged a walkout at the company's London offices following a dispute over layoffs.

In March, Google employees staged a walkout at the company's Zurich offices after more than 200 workers were laid off.

Realty estate developer RMZ Corp. plans to foray into logistics, hospitality, data centres

N. Anand
CHENNAI

Real estate developer RMZ Corp. plans to venture into three new asset classes as part of its vision to develop 350 million square feet of commercial space in India and abroad by 2032, top officials said.

"Apart from commercial space, we are getting into industrial and warehousing (logistics), hospitality and data centres," RMZ Senior Managing Director Thirumal Govindraj said in an interview.

Thirumal Govindraj

"We are in the midst of acquiring lands in six cities," he added.

According to Mr. Govindraj, industrial and warehousing would be the first asset class to be rolled out followed by hospitality and data centres in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune and NCR.

Building hotels

"We might start building hotels. We are waiting for the right opportunity and are scouting for properties. It might take some time."

Talking about the firm's 'Vision 2032', the leading property developer said it would take about eight years to achieve the goal right from the stage of acquiring the land to developing commercial space.

Stating that RMZ had already developed more than 67 million sq. ft. in 20 years in four cities, he said another 32 million sq. ft. was under construction, marking the firm's entry into Mumbai and NCR.

Mr. Govindraj said the main focus would be on developing commercial office space in these six cities rather than selling parcels of land or getting into residential space.

FY24 would see the development of 5 million sq. ft space in Hyderabad, followed by 3.3 million sq. ft. in Bengaluru, 1 million sq. ft. each in Chennai and Pune. In Mumbai, they were developing 1.5 million sq. ft., he added.

Fund-raising plans

He said the zero-debt company had raised $2 billion by selling a portion of its assets to Brookfield Asset Management Company, while Canada Pension Plan Investment Board would invest when needed.

On plans to set up offices in Europe and U.S., K. Jayakumar, Senior MD said: "As Europe is reeling under recession, we have paused our move and are watching the situation."

Sport

Jyothi scripts fairytale finish with gold medals in compound mixed team and individual events

ARCHERY

Sports Bureau

V. Jyothi Surekha performed exceptionally well to claim two compound gold medals in the Archery World Cup Stage-1 in Antalya, Turkey, on Saturday.

Jyothi combined with Ojas Deotale to help India beat Chinese Taipei, comprising Yi-Hsuan Chen and Chieh-Lun Chen, 159-154 in the mixed team final.

The ace archer then defeated two stalwarts, World No.1 Ella Gibson in the semifinals and World champion Sara Lopez in the final, to secure her maiden individual title in a World Cup Stage.

Even in the absence of prominent archer Abhishek Verma, 26-year-old Jyothi, a triple World championships silver medallist, and 20-year-old debutant Deotale shot with amazing consistency as they scored 15 times 10, including 12 Xs, out of a maximum of 16 shots. The only 9, which denied India a world record, came from Deotale in the final end.

This was India's second mixed team gold after Jyothi and Abhishek's win the World Cup Stage-3 in Paris in June last year.

Jyothi continued her fine form in the individual competition.

Close contest

In a neck-and-neck semifinal contest, Jyothi and Great Britain's Ella produced matching scores in the first four ends and were tied 118-118. Jyothi kept her calm to collect a perfect 30 in the final end and secure a decisive two-point lead.

Jyothi raised the bar to get 14 times 10 out of 15 shots in the final to beat Colombia's Sara 149-146. The Indian produced two ends of 30 before matching Sara on 29 in the third. She again scored two more perfect rounds and won the summit clash.

"I am happy to shoot such good scores. I was focusing on my shooting and maintaining my rhythm rather than getting a 10 or a total of 150. It was good to shoot with Ojas. He was enjoying his shooting," Jyothi told *The Hindu*.

Smiles of success: Jyothi and Deotale gave coach Pagni much to cheer with their remarkable show. INSTAGRAM/WORLDARCHERY

Nandhakumar nets two as Odisha makes the final

SUPER CUP

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MANJERI

Odisha FC, jolted by an early goal, came back strongly to end NorthEast United's spirited campaign in the Super Cup on Saturday. Odisha won the second semifinal 3-1, with Nandhakumar netting two of those goals.

But it was NorthEast's prolific scorer Wilmar Jordan Gil who disturbed the net first. A long ball to the right flank from his own half by Mashoor Shereef found Rochharzela, who gave a cross to Jordan Gil.

The Colombian showed his class, slotting the ball home for his seventh goal of the tournament.

Nandhakumar...Odisha's hero
TWITTER/INDIANFOOTBALL.

But, NorthEast's lead didn't last long. Just eight minutes later, Jerry Mawihmingthanga sent in a superb cross from the right to Nandhakumar, who headed it in neatly.

Though both sides continued to create chances in the opening half, neither could convert. The score stayed 1-1 at half-time.

In the second half, Odisha looked more threatening. Nandhakumar was the main reason for that, as he consistently put the North-East defence under pressure.

Eighteen minutes into the second half, he put Odisha ahead with a fierce shot towards the roof of the net. It was a superb finish to his 1-2 with Victor Rodriguez. Then, Diego Mauricio put the match beyond NorthEast, with a firm drive from the edge of the box to the far post.

In the final, to be played at Kozhikode on April 25, Odisha will take on Bengaluru FC.

The result: Odisha FC 3 (Nandhakumar 10 & 63, Diego Mauricio 86) bt NorthEast United 1 (Wilmar Jordan Gil 2).

MASTER BEHIND THE STUMPS

Dhoni doesn't get enough credit for his wicketkeeping: Fleming

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) head coach Stephen Fleming said on Friday that skipper M.S. Dhoni doesn't get enough credit for his wicketkeeping. "I don't think he gets enough credit for his keeping, to be honest. He's an absolute master behind the stumps and that often goes unnoticed with the other things he does."

SETBACK

Stokes at least a week away from regaining full fitness

Ben Stokes has suffered a "setback" in his recovery from injury and would take "a week at least" to regain full fitness. "He's still probably a few days, a week away, at least," CSK coach Stephen Fleming. "It's not major. It's just he's close. He's working really hard to get right. Our priority is getting Ben fit and ready to play."

GREAT RESPECT

Lara doffs his hat to Natarajan, says he never shirks responsibility

SRH head coach Brian Lara said that he has "great respect" for left-arm pacer T. Natarajan. "I've got great respect for Nattu because he's the one that bowls a lot of the hard overs. He bowls that fifth or sixth over, comes back at the death, and the batters are looking to pounce on him. He's never shirked the responsibility."

ZOOMING AHEAD

Rahul becomes fastest Indian to 7,000 runs in T20 cricket

LSG's K.L. Rahul reached the 7,000 run mark in T20 cricket on Saturday. Rahul is the fastest Indian to reach the milestone, reaching there in just 197 innings. Virat Kohli (212), Shikhar Dhawan (246), Suresh Raina (251) and Rohit Sharma (268) are behind him. Rahul has scored 7,054 runs at an average of 42.49.

Titans claw back, leave the Super Giants stunned

Mohit delivers a perfect final over as Rahul's men lose the plot in a tense climax; Noor and Shami, too, chip in for Gujarat after Saha and Hardik's knocks take it to a modest total

IPL-16

S. Dipak Ragav
LUCKNOW

Gujarat Titans pulled off a heist against Lucknow Super Giants with a seven-run win at the Ekana Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

Chasing a target of 136, Super Giants were cruising at 106 for one in the 15th over, with skipper K.L. Rahul leading the charge and Krunal Pandya proving an ideal foil.

However, Afghanistan's left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmed bowled Titans back into contention, removing Krunal and Nicholas Pooran and conceding just five in his last two overs.

On a pitch where stroke-making was difficult, Rahul looked at ease. In the company of opening partner Kyle Mayers, he took the team to 53 in the Power-Play. Rahul struck three consecutive fours off Mohammed Shami in the bowler's second over, pulling him twice to the ropes and deftly guiding a delivery to the point boundary.

Rahul welcomed Rashid Khan with two fours off the first two deliveries as he added 51 for the second wicket with Krunal in quick time. The Super Giants captain, who reached his 50 off 38 balls, suddenly lost his touch and struggled with his timing. Rahul failed to hit a single boundary after crossing the half-century mark.

With 30 needed off five overs, the Titans spinners Noor and offie Jayant Yadav tightened the screws before pacers Shami and Mohit Sharma got into the act, conceding just 15 in the last three overs.

Defending 12 in the final over, Mohit dismissed Rahul and Marcus Stoinis – it was a surprise he wasn't sent earlier – off successive balls. Ayush Badoni and Deepak Hooda were run out off the next two balls, putting the contest beyond Super Giants' reach.

Earlier, Titans crawled to 135 for six after choosing to bat. The side rode on opener Wriddhiman Saha's aggressive knock and skipper Hardik Pandya's mature innings.

Saha was impressive during the PowerPlay, hitting boundaries at regular intervals.

The Super Giants bowlers, realising that the ball was gripping off the surface, took the pace off their deliveries and made the Titans batters earn runs.

The visitors were 102 for four in 17 overs when Hardik went after Ravi Bishnoi, smashing the leggie for a four and back-to-back sixes in the 18th over.

The final flourish eventually proved the difference in a dramatic climax.

When push comes to shove: Mohit kept his cool in the final over to pick up two wickets and also effect a run out. SPORTZPICS/IPL

Next assignment

GT: April 25 vs. **MI**
Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.

LSG: April 28 vs. **PBKS**
Mohali, 7.30 p.m.

Points Table

	M	W	L	Pts	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	6	4	2	8	1.043
Lucknow Super Giants	7	4	3	8	0.547
Chennai Super Kings	6	4	2	8	0.355
Gujarat Titans	6	4	2	8	0.212
Punjab Kings	7	4	3	8	-0.162
Royal Challengers Bengaluru	6	3	3	6	-0.068
Mumbai Indians	6	3	3	6	-0.254
Kolkata Knight Riders	6	2	4	4	0.214
Sunrisers Hyderabad	6	2	4	4	-0.794
Delhi Capitals	6	1	5	2	-1.183

After the MI-PBKS match on April 22

SCOREBOARD

GUJARAT TITANS

Wriddhiman Saha c Hooda b Krunal 47 *(37b, 6x4)*, Shubman Gill c Bishnoi b Krunal 0 *(2b)*, Hardik Pandya c Rahul b Stoinis 66 *(50b, 2x4, 4x6)*, Abhinav Manohar c Naveen b Mishra 3 *(5b)*, Vijay Shankar b Naveen 10 *(12b, 1x4)*, David Miller c Hooda b Stoinis 6 *(12b)*, Rahul Tewatia (not out) 2 *(2b)*; Extras (lb-1): 1; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 135.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-4 (Gill, 1.2 overs), 2-72 (Saha, 10.3), 3-77 (Abhinav, 11.4), 4-92 (Vijay Shankar, 14.6), 5-132 (Hardik, 19.2), 6-135 (Miller, 19.6).

SUPER GIANTS BOWLING

Naveen 4-0-19-1, Krunal 4-0-16-2, Avesh 3-0-21-0, Bishnoi 4-0-49-0, Stoinis 3-0-20-2, Mishra 2-0-9-1.

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS

K.L. Rahul c Jayant b Mohit 68 *(61b, 8x4)*, Kyle Mayers b Rashid 24 *(19b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Krunal Pandya st. Saha b Noor 23 *(23b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Nicholas Pooran c Hardik b Noor 1 *(7b)*, Ayush Badoni run out 8 *(6b)*, Marcus Stoinis c Miller b Mohit 0 *(1b)*, Deepak Hooda run out 2 *(2b)*, Prerak Mankad **(Impact Player in place of Mishra)** (not out) 0 *(0b)*, Ravi Bishnoi (not out) 0 *(1b)*; Extras (lb-1, w-1): 2; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 128.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-55 (Mayers, 6.3), 2-106 (Krunal, 14.3), 3-110 (Pooran, 16.5), 4-126 (Rahul, 19.2), 5-126 (Stoinis, 19.3), 6-127 (Badoni, 19.4), 7-128 (Hooda, 19.5).

TITANS BOWLING

Shami 3-1-18-0, Jayant **(Impact Player in place of Gill)** 4-0-26-0, Rashid 4-0-33-1, Mohit 3-0-17-2, Noor 4-0-18-2, Hardik 1-0-7-0, Tewatia 1-0-8-0.

Toss: Titans; **PoM:** Mohit.

Titans won by seven runs.

Mumbai Indians falls short despite Rohit, Surya's efforts after Curran and Bhatia pilot Punjab Kings to big total

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav sizzled. Tim David dazzled. Yet, the trio's effort did not match the heroics of Punjab Kings' trio of captain Sam Curran, Harpreet Singh Bhatia and Jitesh Sharma.

Decisive

Moreover, in a high-scoring affair, Arshdeep Singh's pitch-perfect last over turned out be decisive as Punjab Kings registered a narrow 13-run win at the Wankhede Stadium.

Arshdeep ensured that Mumbai Indians' highest score at its home ground, while chasing a target, turned out to be a futile effort.

When the left-arm pacer – having accounted for an on-song Suryakumar in the 18th over – was given the ball by Curran, Mumbai Indians required 16 runs off the last over.

With David having just hoisted a 114-metre six and the in-form Tilak Varma riding high on a vociferous home support, MI would have fancied its chances of registering a fourth consecutive win.

However, Arshdeep conceded just two runs, and shattered the stumps of Tilak and impact player Nehal Wadhera, off successive balls, to ensure Kings' batting effort in the latter half of their innings didn't go to waste.

Had it not been for Curran and Harpreet's 90-run association off 50 balls, Kings would have fallen way short of the par score. At the halfway stage, when Curran joined Harpreet, Kings were wobbling at 83 for four.

Mumbai Indians tightened the noose when it conceded just 35 runs in the next five overs and kept the left-handed duo in check.

The floodgates opened with Arjun Tendulkar – who had bowled a perfect yorker to trap Prabhsimran Singh leg-before earlier – wilting under the onslaught. The 16th over, which turned out to be an eight-ball over, saw Curran and Harpreet plunder 31 runs.

Once Curran lofted him into the sight-screen off the first ball, Arjun, feeling the pressure, couldn't get his act together as two Punjab batters got going.

The onslaught continued and Kings hammered 96 runs in the last five overs to shift the pendulum in their favour.

Even after Cameron Green broke the 90-run association off 50 balls, with Harpreet playing a yorker on to his stumps, Jitesh tonked four sixes in seven balls to end the innings on a high.

Game changers: Curran's onslaught took Punjab Kings to a massive score before Arshdeep bowled a brilliant last over to scuttle Mumbai Indians' spirited chase. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Next assignment

MI: April 25 vs. **GT**
Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.

PBKS: April 28 vs. **LSG**
Mohali, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS

Matthew Short c Chawla b Green 11 *(10b, 2x4)*, Prabhsimran Singh lbw b Arjun Tendulkar 26 *(17b, 1x4, 2x6)*, Atharva Taide b Chawla 29 *(17b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Liam Livingstone st. Kishan b Chawla 10 *(12b, 1x6)*, Harpreet Bhatia b Green 41 *(28b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Sam Curran c & b Archer 55 *(29b, 5x4, 4x6)*, Jitesh Sharma b Behrendorff 25 *(7b, 4x6)*, Shahrukh Khan (not out) 0 *(0b)*, Harpreet Brar run out 5 *(2b, 1x4)*; Extras (lb-3, w-7, nb-2): 12; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 214.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-18 (Short, 2.3 overs), 2-65 (Prabhsimran, 6.4), 3-82 (Livingstone, 9.1), 4-83 (Taide, 9.4), 5-175 (Bhatia, 17.4), 6-197 (Curran, 18.6), 7-209 (Jitesh, 19.4), 8-214 (Brar, 19.6).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING

Arjun Tendulkar 3-0-48-1, Behrendorff 3-0-41-1, Green 4-0-41-2, Archer 4-0-42-1, Chawla 3-0-15-2, Shokeen 3-0-24-0.

MUMBAI INDIANS

Rohit Sharma c & b Livingstone 44 *(27b, 4x4, 3x6)*, Ishan Kishan c Short b Arshdeep 1 *(4b)*, Cameron Green c Curran b Ellis 67 *(43b, 6x4, 3x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav c Taide b Arshdeep 57 *(26b, 7x4, 3x6)*, Tim David (not out) 25 *(13b, 2x6)*, Tilak Varma b Arshdeep 3 *(4b)*, Nehal Wadhera **(Impact Player in place of Behrendorff)** b Arshdeep 0 *(1b)*, Jofra Archer (not out) 1 *(2b)*; Extras (w-3): 3; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 201.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Kishan, 1.1), 2-84 (Rohit, 9.3), 3-159 (Green, 15.3), 4-182 (Suryakumar, 17.4), 5-200 (Tilak, 19.3), 6-200 (Wadhera, 19.4).

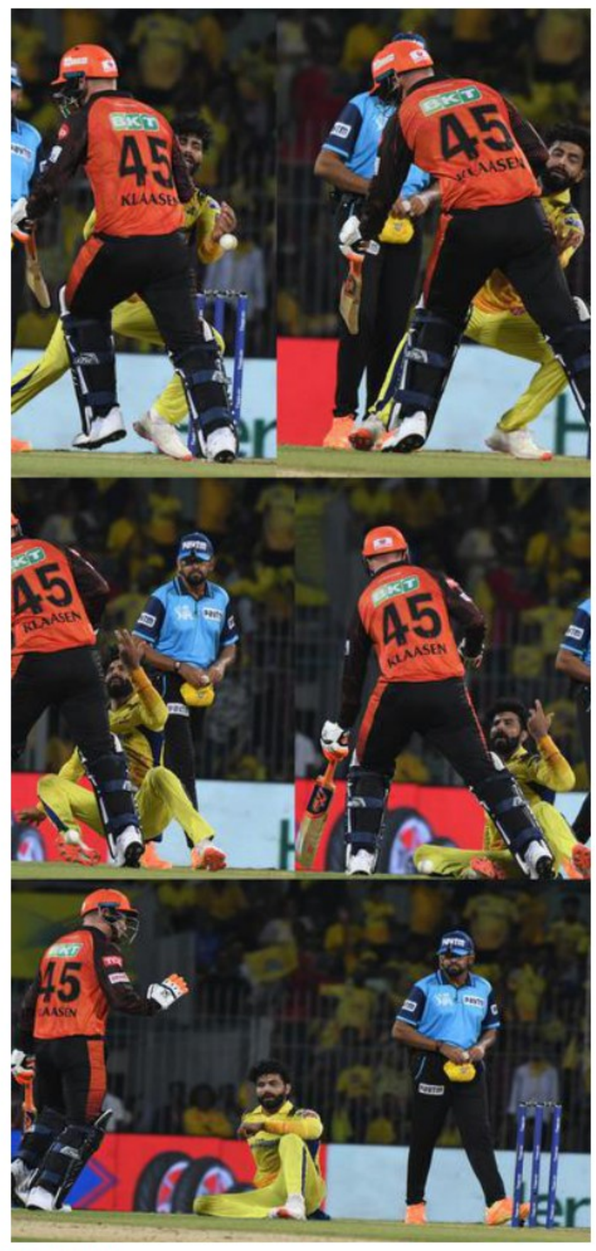
PUNJAB KINGS BOWLING

Short 1-0-7-0, Arshdeep 4-0-29-4, Brar 2-0-15-0, Curran 3-0-41-0, Ellis **(Impact Player in place of Prabhsimran)** 4-0-44-1, Rahul Chahar 4-0-42-0, Livingstone 2-0-23-1.

Toss: MI; **PoM:** Curran.

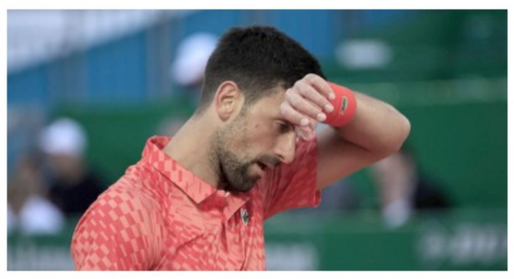
Punjab Kings won by 13 runs.

Move aside, Sirji!



Roadblock: Ravindra Jadeja was all set to catch Mayank Agarwal off his bowling when he was stopped in his tracks by non-striker Heinrich Klaasen in the CSK-SRH match in Chennai on Friday. The collision left the bowler fuming at the missed opportunity. R. RAGU

INBRIEF



Novak Djokovic to miss Madrid Open, say organisers

Novak Djokovic. who suffered a shock quarterfinal loss to fellow Serb Dusan Lajovic in the Banja Luka tournament, has pulled out of next week's Madrid Open, organisers said on Saturday, with the World No. 1 joining Rafael Nadal on the sidelines.

Railways defeats Tamil Nadu in Federation Cup volleyball

Railways beat Tamil Nadu 33-31, 25-17, 25-19 in a Group-B men's match of the 36th Federation Cup volleyball championships at Karaikal on Saturday.

Other results: Women (round-robin league): Railways bt Puducherry 25-11, 25-11, 25-12; Rajasthan bt West Bengal 22-25, 25-20, 25-16, 25-22.

Bhambri-Myneni pair loses in Munich semifinals

Yuki Bhambri and Saketh Myneni were beaten 7-6(4), 6-3 by Alexander Erler and Lucas Miedler in the doubles semifinals of the €630,705 ATP tennis tournament in Munich, Germany, on Saturday. The Indian pair collected 90 ATP points and €9,330. In the $25,000 ITF women's event in Nottingham, top seeds Naiktha Bains and Maia Lumsden beat the second seeds Rutuja Bhosale and Ankita Raina 6-1, 6-4 in the doubles final.

Next target is to get into the top 100: AIFF president

After a jump of five spots in the latest FIFA rankings, the Indian football team's next target is to breach top 100, All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey said. "Wins over Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan in the tournament helped India boost their FIFA ranking while Manipur as a state bared its heart for the beautiful game. Now ranked 101, our next focus is to break the 100 mark and rise further," Chaubey said in AIFF's latest Vision 2047 newsletter. India achieved its best ever ranking of 94 in February 1996. The country breached the top 100 in 1993 (99th), 2017 (96th) and 2018 (96th).

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: MTV, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 a.m.

World Chess championship: FIDE & Chess.com YouTube channels, 2.30 p.m. onwards

IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 3.30 p.m. & 7.30 p.m.

Serie A: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 4, 6.30, 9.30 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Monday)

LaLiga: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 5.30, 7.45, 10 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Monday)

Premier League: SS Select 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 6.30 p.m.

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 7 & 9 p.m.

Another high-scoring affair looms as Royal Challengers host Royals

The home side will again look to its top-order to come good; the visitor also has enough ammunition to come out firing

IPL-16

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

A run feast is on the cards when Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) takes on Rajasthan Royals (RR) at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Saturday.

Batters had a field day in the previous encounter at this venue, when RCB and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) scored in excess of 200.

"Even the good balls go for boundaries here. Batsmen do not have any apprehension going for big shots because even if they do not connect, they are likely to clear the boundary line," RCB speedster Harshal Patel said on Saturday.

RCB will once again rely on Faf du Plessis, Virat Kohli and Glenn Maxwell to come good with the bat. du Plessis and Kohli did well in the match against Punjab Kings on Thursday, leading the unit to a 24-run win. It is when the top-order fails that RCB struggles.

Key players: Royals' coach Sangakkara, right, would expect Hetmyer and Ashwin to bring out their best in the match-up against Royal Challengers. K. MURALI KUMAR

RCB fast bowler Mohammed Siraj has had a breakout season with 12 wickets in this tournament. Fellow pacer Josh Hazlewood, who has been out of action for three months due to Achilles tendonitis, has been training with the squad. The Australian bowled in the nets here on Saturday, and it remains to be seen if he will feature in the eleven on Sunday.

RR suffered a second loss in six outings a few days ago, falling to Lucknow Super Giants by 10 runs. Yashasvi Jaiswal, Jos Buttler, Sanju Samson and Shimron Hetmyer may not make consistent scores, but overall, the visitor possesses enough ammunition to come out firing.

RR seamer Sandeep Sharma will fancy bowling to Kohli, having dismissed the star batter seven times in 14 T20 matches. Sandeep, however, played down his great record against Kohli. "I've been lucky against Kohli. I've got him out seven times, but I've been lucky on three of four occasions. I've been lucky with the umpire's decision, and Kohli has also nicked it down the leg," Sandeep said.

TODAY'S MATCHES

RCB vs. RR — Bengaluru, 3.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 27
RCB 13 | RR 12 | NR 2
PREVIOUS MEETING
RR won by seven wickets, 2022

KKR vs. CSK — Kolkata, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 26
KKR 9 | CSK 17
PREVIOUS MEETING
KKR won by six wickets, 2022

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA APP

Spin-heavy Knight Riders and Super Kings ready for battle

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Chennai Super Kings, led by the astute M.S. Dhoni, will look to sustain the momentum and consolidate its position at the top half of the table when it meets a struggling Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens on Sunday.

Having won its last two matches, including the one against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday, Super Kings will be high on confidence. The openers – Devon Conway and Ruturaj Gaikwad – will be keen to continue the good work. Ajinkya Rahane and Shivam Dube, too, will be eager to keep firing.

Super Kings' bowling strength lies in its spin department where Ravindra Jadeja has been the pick. Along with Maheesh Theekshana and Moeen Ali, the India left-arm spinner has forged a formidable combination. The 20-year-old seamers – left-armer Akash Singh and Sri Lanka's Matheesha Pathirana – have delivered for the side along with Tushar Deshpande, who has started to find his rhythm.

It promises to be a fascinating duel as Knight Riders, too, relies heavily on its spinners – Sunil Narine, Varun Chakaravarthy, Suyash Sharma and Anukul Roy.

Nitish Rana's men have blown hot and cold in batting, with the poor show against Delhi Capitals in the previous game putting pressure on the team which has suffered three straight losses.

Jason Roy, playing his first game, performed well against Capitals while Litton Das will be fired up to deliver. The Kolkata fans will hope the rain stays away for this Sunday blockbuster.

Seeking consistency: Rinku and skipper Nitish will look to deliver on a regular basis for Knight Riders. K.R. DEEPAK

Lara, Fleming note spinners' contribution to CSK's win

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Brian Lara credited the Chennai Super Kings spinners for setting up their team's seven-wicket win here on Friday.

"It (the wicket) was a little bit slow, (there was) a little bit of spin. So, it was difficult for the batters. The likes of Theekshana, Jadeja really don't give you time to use your feet.

"And I think that they bowled well, credit has to be given. Maybe shot selections could have been different in those middle overs," he said after the match.

Lara said that the team felt "the outfield had no dew on it" because of which Mayank Dagar instead of Natarajan came on as the impact player with the team hoping to "put a stranglehold" on CSK with spin.

He added that the opening combination of Harry Brook and a fully-fit Abhishek Sharma will "continue for a period of time."

The big one: Theekshana and Dhoni celebrate Markram's dismissal. R. RAGU

Resourceful

CSK head coach Stephen Fleming highlighted Maheesh Theekshana resourcefulness, specially with reference to Aiden Markram's dismissal, who was caught behind by M.S. Dhoni off a quicker, bouncier ball.

"He's very skillful. He's very subtle with his skill. He's always coming at a player. So, you can't really get a rhythm as a hitter. His deceptive change of pace just makes hitters kick themselves at times. He did very well to get that wicket.

Fleming said that the team was "not overly comfortable yet" with its home conditions.

He said that the ball didn't "skid on a little bit better" as was expected in the second half. But he felt that "enough good work with the ball" had been done for his team to get across the line.

Alcaraz eases past Evans to set up summit clash against Tsitsipas in Barcelona Open

TENNIS

Agence France-Presse
BARCELONA

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz swept past Dan Evans 6-2, 6-2 on Saturday to set up a Barcelona Open final clash with Stefanos Tsitsipas.

The Greek second seed earlier defeated Lorenzo Musetti 6-4, 5-7, 6-3 to reach the final for the third time.

World No. 2 Alcaraz beat Tsitsipas in the quarterfinals at Barcelona last year in three sets in what was the Spaniard's third win in three meetings against the Greek.

Alcaraz missed the Monte Carlo Masters last week because of hand and back problems and has not been at his most consistent on his way to the final.

World No. 5 Tsitsipas needed three sets to beat Musetti, who put up a decent fight. "We had to cover lots of metres on the court and he had some incredible defensive shots that I really didn't expect at all, it was such a mental challenge," said Tsitsipas. "I had to go out there and fight it all through (with) the determination of a lion, and just (went) out there to do the best I can."

The results (semifinals): Carlos Alcaraz bt Dan Evans 6-2, 6-2; Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Lorenzo Musetti 6-4, 5-7, 6-3

Arsenal hits another speedbump in pursuit of Premier League title

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies
LONDON

Arsenal dropped points for the third game in a row after having to come from two goals down to draw with last-placed Southampton 3-3, falling just short of another remarkable comeback in the English Premier League on Friday.

Theo Walcott helped to deal another blow to his former team's title hopes by putting Southampton 2-0 up after just 14 minutes as the hosts dug themselves a hole they couldn't fully get out of.

Southampton led 3-1 in the 88th minute before goals by Martin Odegaard and Bukayo Saka dragged Arsenal to parity, and Leandro Trossard hit the crossbar in injury time as Arsenal nearly added a winner as well.

But in the end it was a third straight draw for Mikel Arteta's team, which let a 2-0 lead slip away in its previous two games, and a result that handed Manchester City the advantage in the title race.

Arsenal still leads by five points but City has two games in hand and the Gunners need a win against Pep Guardiola's team at the Etihad on Wednesday to stay in control of their own fate.

Goalbound: Odegaard scores Arsenal's second against Southampton. REUTERS

Bundesliga leader Bayern Munich slumped to a 3-1 loss at Mainz 05 on Saturday, conceding all three goals in a span of 14 minutes in its latest slip-up which could prove costly in the race for the Bundesliga title with five games remaining.

The results: Premier League: Fulham 2 (Wilson 58, Pereira 72) bt Leeds 1 (Bamford 78); Brentford 1 (Toney 65) drew with Aston Villa 1 (Douglas Luiz 87); Crystal Palace 0 drew with Everton 0; Leicester City 2 (Iheanacho 37-pen, Castagne 75) bt Wolves 1 (Matheus Cunha 13); Liverpool 3 (Jota 47, 55, Salah 70) bt Nottingham Forest 2 (Williams 51, Gibbs-White 67).

LaLiga: Osasuna 3 (Budimir 6, 11, Moncayola 41) bt Real Betis 2 (Miranda 16, Rodriguez 70).

Bundesliga: Mainz 3 (Ajorque 65, Barreiro 73, Martin 79) bt Bayern Munich 1 (Mane 29); Hoffenheim 1 (Dolberg 90+4) lost to Cologne 3 (Kainz 18-pen, Selke 39, Thielmann 90+2); Bochum 1 (Broschinski 68) lost to Wolfsburg 5 (Svanberg 10, 56, Kaminski 21, Wimmer 33, Waldschmidt 77); Hertha Berling 2 (Ngankam 68, Lukebakio 79-pen) lost to Werder Bremen 4 (Ducksch 6, 27, 51, Weiser 63).

On Friday: Premier League: Arsenal 3 (Martinelli 20, Odegaard 88, Saka 90) drew with Southampton 3 (Alcaraz 1, Walcott 14, Caleta-Car 66).

LaLiga: Espanyol 0 drew with Cadiz 0.

Serie A: Verona 2 (Verdi 45+6-pen, 62) bt Bologna 1 (Dominguez 90+4).

Bundesliga: Augsburg 1 (Beljo 8) drew with VfB Stuttgart 1 (Endo 78).

BENGALURU ROUND-UP

Yash and Sumanth architects of MSRIT's thumping win

Yash Neralkar (109) and Sumanth (5/11) starred for MSRIT as it thrashed NHCE by 170 runs in the M.S. Ramaiah All India inter-engineering colleges cricket tournament.

The scores: MSRIT 248/4 in 30 overs (Yash Neralkar 109, Akshan Rao 83) bt NHCE 78 in 18.5 overs (Darshan 26, Sumanth 5/11). BIT 174/9 in 27 overs (Rishab Gowda 37, Pradhan 33, Ujjwal 4/28) lost to GAT 176/7 in 26 overs (Yeshas 37, Neeraj 37, Madhav 36).

Hemanth does the 'trick for Ideal Sports Academy-B

Hemanth scored a hat-trick as Ideal Sports Academy-B blanked New Ashoka HC 5-0 in the Travancore Cup hockey tournament here on Saturday.

The results: Bengaluru Blues HC 4 (Rama 8, Thanu Nanjappa 12, 14, Prajwal 34) bt Ideal Sports Academy-A 0; Ideal Sports Academy-B 5 (Vijay 16, Hemanth 24, 30, 31, Chandru 29) bt New Ashoka HC 0.

Manoj excels in DYES narrow win

Manoj scored 33 points as DYES Bangalore edged Mangalore BC 73-70 in the State A-division basketball championship for men here on Saturday.

The results: Bank of Baroda 110 (Harish 23, Mufeez 18) bt IBBC 54 (Karan 15, Yeshwanth 11); DYES Bangalore 73 (Manoj 33, Rakshith 16, Akshay 11) bt Mangalore BC 70 (Rajath 20, Pradyumna 15, Ashwij 14); ASC 77 (Issac 17, Ravi 13) bt MNK Rao Park BC 60 (Ajin 26, Sanjay 13); S. Blues 93 (Ganesh 22, Gowda 17, Dencil 15) bt Beagles BC 81 (Achintya 29, Satyajit 19); Young Orions SC 91 (Gautham 21, Sumanth 19) bt GST & Customs 74 (Dheeraj 27, Atesh 15).